UNIV. OF CALIF. LIBRARY, LOS ANGELES

Charles Gulliver
wishes you
A Happy New Year.

6.5°

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2007 with funding from
Microsoft Corporation

http://www.archive.org/details/talesfromworksof00hentiala

772

CAUGHT IN THE CYCLONE

Tales from the Works

of

G. A. Henty

BLACKIE AND SON LIMITED
LONDON GLASGOW AND BOMBAY

Printed in Great Britain by
Blackie & Son, Limited, Glasgow

Stack
Annex
PR
4785
H39A14
1915

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

George Alfred Henty, war correspondent and author, was born at Trumpington, near Cambridge, on December 8, 1832. He was educated at Westminster School and Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge. Leaving Cambridge without a degree, he went to the Crimea during the war with Russia and served in the purveyor's department of the army. On being invalided home he was appointed purveyor to the forces, and in 1859 he went to Italy to organize the hospitals of the Italian legion. After his return he held similar home appointments for a time, but he resigned his commission later and engaged in mining operations in Wales and Sardinia. In 1865 he began his career as war correspondent for the *Standard* newspaper, and in this capacity went through the Austro-Italian, Abyssinian, Franco-German, Ashanti, and Turco-Servian campaigns. He was also in Paris during the Commune, and he accompanied Edward VII when, as Prince of Wales, he visited India. He described two of these campaigns in *The March to Magdala* (1868) and *The March to Coomassie* (1874). His death took place on his yacht in Weymouth harbour on November 16, 1902.

Henty wrote several novels of the orthodox type, but his reputation rests upon his stories for boys, which are full of adventure and are mostly based on famous historical events. Among them are: *Out on the Pampas* (1868); *The Young Franc-Tireurs* (1871), a Story of the Franco-German War; *The Young Buglers*, a Tale of the Peninsular War (1879); *In Times of Peril*, a Tale of India (1881); *Under Drake's Flag* (1882); *With Clive in*

India (1883); *Facing Death* (1883), treating of coal-mining; *The Young Colonists* (1884), a Story of the Transvaal Revolt and the Zulu War; *The Lion of the North* (1885), a Story of Gustavus Adolphus; *St. George for England*: a Tale of Cressy and Poitiers (1885); *In Freedom's Cause*: a Story of Wallace and Bruce (1885); *The Young Carthaginian* (1886), a Story of Hannibal; *With Wolfe in Canada* (1886); *Orange and Green*: a Tale of the Boyne and Limerick (1887); *Bonnie Prince Charlie*: a Tale of Fontenoy and Culloden (1887); *The Cat of Bubastes* (1888), treating of Life in Ancient Egypt; *Captain Bayley's Heir* (1888); *By Pike and Dyke* (1889), a Story of the Dutch War of Independence; *One of the 28th*: a Tale of Waterloo (1889); *Tales of Daring and Danger* (1889); *A Chapter of Adventures* (1890); *By Right of Conquest* (1890), a Story of the Conquest of Mexico; *The Tiger of Mysore* (1895), a Story of Tippoo Sahib; *Through Russian Snows* (1895), a Tale of Napoleon's retreat from Moscow; *The Reign of Terror* (1896); *With Moore at Corunna* (1897); *Both Sides the Border* (1898), a Story of Hotspur and Owen Glendower; *In the Irish Brigade* (1900); *With Roberts to Pretoria* (1902); *With Kitchener in the Soudan* (1903); and *With the Allies to Pekin* (1904).

CONTENTS

Page

THE MATE'S STORY, from "The Plague Ship" - - 7

THE EXPLOSION IN THE VAUGHAN PIT, from "Facing Death" - - - - - - - - - - 24

THE RED CAPTAIN, from "One of the 28th" - - 52

A WIFE'S STRATAGEM, from "In Freedom's Cause" - 70

KINDNESS REWARDED, from "Captain Bayley's Heir" 89

A BATTLE WITH WOLVES, from "The Young Carthaginian" - - - - - - - - - - - 97

A CYCLONE IN THE BAY OF BENGAL, from "A Chapter of Adventures" - - - - - - - 109

THE FLOOD IN PINE-TREE GULCH, from "Tales of Daring and Danger" - - - - - - - - 126

A BRUSH WITH THE CHINESE, from "Tales of Daring and Danger" - - - - - - - - - 132

THE BLACK DEATH, from "St. George for England" - 174

THE WHITE SHIP, from "The Reign of Terror" - - 186

THE CHILD'S RETURN, from "With Wolfe in Canada" 198

THE BLACK HOLE OF CALCUTTA, from "With Clive in India" - - - - - - - - - - 207

THE MATE'S STORY.

FROM "THE PLAGUE SHIP."

(*By kind permission of the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge.*)

[Mr. Thompson, at one time second mate of the whaling ship *The Two Brothers*, was telling his three nieces the story of his last voyage in that ship. At Singapore, on her way home from the South Seas, she had taken on board, as passengers, a Mr. Williams and his wife and daughter. Mr. Williams had been working for twenty years among the Papuans as missionary. On the homeward voyage they had been blown down by a hurricane among the Malay Islands, and had been attacked by the Malays, but had beaten them off. Having told the story of that engagement, Mr. Thompson went on—]

The breeze for the next ten days was steady and favourable. We were fairly on our way now, and began to hope that our ill-luck was at an end, and that we were going to make a fast and comfortable homeward run. Ten days after we had left the island the look-out reported a sail. We were taking a slight breeze along with us, and we came up fast to the ship, which was lying becalmed.

"What can she be doing, Mr. Wilson?" the captain said. "She has got nothing

above her topsails, although she must see that we are bringing down a breeze with us."

"Can't make her out, sir," Mr. Wilson replied. He fetched a glass from the companion and raised it to his eye. "Her ensign's reversed, sir," he exclaimed. "She is in distress somehow."

We bore down to her, and the skipper threw the barque up into the wind within a hundred yards of her. Till we got close we could not see a soul on deck, but now a head appeared above the bulwark.

"What's the matter with you?" the captain shouted.

"We have got fever on board. The captain and both mates are dead. There are only seven of us left alive, and two of them have got it. For God's sake help us!"

The men had shown themselves brave enough in their fight with the Malays, but standing as they were by the bulwark, watching the strange ship, there wasn't one but shrank back when he heard that hail. And well they might, for when the Indian fever gets on board a ship there is no saying what may come of it. There were white faces on the poop too, and I reckon that

there wasn't one of us who didn't feel a cold thrill run through him.

"What's to be done?" the captain said in a low voice, more as if he was asking the question of himself than us.

At first no one spoke, and then Mr. Williams said:

"Our duty is clear. God has sent us here to their aid, and whatever be the risk, we must run it; we cannot sail away and leave them to perish."

"It is a terrible choice to have to make," the captain said huskily. "I am responsible for the lives of all on board this ship, passengers and crew. I know what these fevers are; they go right through a ship. There are but seven men alive now on yonder vessel; another day or two there may not be one. If we have dealings with them, their fate may be ours."

"We are all in God's hands," the clergyman said quietly. "I have over and over again risked the lives of my dear ones in His service, and I am ready to do so again. You agree with me," he said, turning to his wife and daughter, "that, however great the danger, it is our duty to aid these poor creatures?"

Mrs. Williams glanced piteously at her

daughter, and her lip quivered, but she bowed her head in assent, while Jane exclaimed:

"Of course, father; who could hesitate for a moment?"

THE MATE'S STORY.—II.

The skipper looked at the rest of us. Not one of us but would rather have met a score of prahus, crowded with Malays thirsting for our blood, than have boarded that ship; but after Jane Williams had spoken not one but was ashamed to say what he thought. At last, seeing none of the others would speak, I answered:

"If the ladies are ready to take the risk, sir, it is not for us men to draw back. As Mr. Williams says, we are all in God's hands, so let us do our duty."

"So be it," the captain said solemnly; and turning to the men, who were clustered in the waist, he ordered a boat to be lowered.

There was a general shout of "No! no! It will be throwing away our lives!"

Then an old sailor came forward.

"My mates have asked me, captain, to speak for them, and say that they are of one mind that it will be just throwing away our

lives to board that ship. We are ready to obey you, Captain Peters, to do our duty like men in storm or calm, but we won't have the plague brought on board this ship."

There was a general chorus of assent, and some of the men sprang to the braces, and prepared to haul the yards aft and put her on her course again. We looked at the captain for orders. There were but three of us, for the trader and the parson couldn't be reckoned upon in a fight against the crew, and the passenger mate was still laid up with his leg.

"Men," the skipper said, "remember that there are seven sailors like yourselves on board that ship who must die if you don't go to their rescue. Think what your feelings would be if you were in their case, and a ship came up within hailing distance, and sailed away and left you to die."

"It comes to this, sir," the spokesman said. "Like enough they will die anyhow, whether they stop there or whether they come on board. It ain't a case of saving their lives, for maybe they wouldn't be saved after all; we should be just throwing away our lives for nothing."

Maybe the skipper was somewhat of the

same opinion. Anyhow there was no good trying to use force, for they were eight to one against us. He half turned round, and wouldn't, I think, have said any more, when Jane Williams stepped forward to the poop rail.

"Men," she said, "my father has told me so much of English sailors, how brave they are, how ready to risk their lives for others, that I cannot think you really mean to sail away and desert these poor people. We are ready, my father, mother, and I, to run the risk; surely you will do the same."

The men stood silent a minute, and then, one after another, turned away, as if they could not stand her pleading face. But I could see that they were still determined not to risk having the plague on board. The sailor said a word or two to his mates and then turned to her.

THE MATE'S STORY.—III.

"There is not a man of this crew, Miss," he said, "but would do anything for you. Not one but would risk his life for you in a right-down manful fight. But we are not ready to die like dogs, and that when maybe

no good whatever would come of it; and we don't hold that, just on the chance of saving seven lives, we are called upon to risk losing thirty."

Jane turned round with a different expression on her face. I never saw any one look like it, and never shall again; but it seemed to me that her face all shone, and she said:

"Then, father, we at least can do our duty, and our place is there."

Her father understood her.

"You are right, Jane, quite right, my child. Captain, will you give us one of the boats? I and my wife and daughter will go on board that ship. Will you leave our things at the Cape when you touch there, for us to pick up, if it is God's will we ever reach the land?"

The captain stood like one dumb; then I said: "Captain Peters, as it seems that there are no officers on board the ship, I will, if you will give me permission, go on board her also and take charge."

"Very well, Mr. Thompson; if such is your wish I shall certainly not oppose it, and I honour you for the proposal."

"Can you spare me four men, sir, if I can get them to volunteer?"

The captain nodded, and I turned to the men.

"My lads," I said, "Mr. Williams, his wife and daughter, are going on board that ship; they are going to leave *The Two Brothers* for good, and to throw in their lot with those poor wretches there. With the captain's permission I am going to take command of her, and I want four volunteers to go with me. I want no men with wives and children dependent upon them, for we shall be taking our lives in our hands. I want four men who have no one to grieve for them at home if they die in doing their duty. I want four true English hearts who will imitate the example set them by these ladies."

Eight of the men stepped forward at once. Sailors are curious creatures. There wasn't one of them but had shrunk from the idea of the introduction of fever on board *The Two Brothers;* but to go on board the pest-stricken vessel was an act of heroism which they were ready to perform. Besides, though they had refused to respond to the appeal of Jane Williams, and had held together as a body, there was not one of them who did not at heart feel ashamed at being beaten in courage by a girl. The eight men who

stepped forward were, I believe, the only unmarried men among the crew, and I believe that had I asked them there wasn't a man but would have gone.

I chose four of them, and in a few minutes they had got their kits out of the fo'castle and placed them in one of the boats. The steward brought the boxes from the passengers' cabin, and the captain ordered a barrel of vinegar and a keg of powder to be hoisted into the boat. Just as the men were getting ready to lower her from the davits, the sailor who had acted as spokesman came forward.

"Captain Peters, the men wants me to say as they have changed their minds and are ready to go off and bring those men on board. It isn't in nature for men to stand by and see themselves beaten by two women."

We had a short consultation, but Mr. Williams pointed out that the plan arranged was the best, as only those who went on board the ship were running a risk; while if the men were brought on board *The Two Brothers* the whole crew might be carried off.

"Thank you, men, for your offer," he said to them, when we had talked it over; "but

the other plan is clearly the best, and I ask each and all of you to offer up a prayer to Almighty God that He will protect us in this work which we undertake for His sake."

The clergyman uncovered, as did every man on board, and you could have heard a pin drop as he prayed. Then those who were to go took their places in the boat, and as the skipper handed in the ladies, every man stood bareheaded. Not a word was said. I don't think any one could have trusted himself to speak. I gave the word, the boat was lowered, and the falls unhooked.

"God bless you all!" the captain said in a broken voice.

There was a sort of murmur from the rest, and I don't believe there was a dry eye on the ship as we rowed away.

THE MATE'S STORY.—IV.

"Now, lads," I said as we got near the vessel, "you must remember that the best preservative against the fever is to keep up your spirits. You must make up your minds that you have come on board to fight it, and you don't mean to be beaten, and with God's

help and protection I think that we shall win the day. You were all cheery and confident when those Malays were coming on to attack us; we must fight the fever in just the same spirit."

A rope was thrown as we came alongside, and I mounted on to the deck; just as I did so there came a cheer from *The Two Brothers.* It was a strange sort of cheer, but we understood that while our messmates wanted to say good-bye to us, their voices were too much choked to come out clear and strong.

"Give them a cheer back, lads," I said; and though there were only six men, the shout we gave was a deal louder and heartier than that of the whole crew of *The Two Brothers;* the ladies waved their handkerchiefs. Then we heard the skipper's voice across the water giving orders; the yards swung round, and *The Two Brothers* began to slip through the water again on her course. Then I jumped down from the rail on to the deck of the vessel. Four men were standing there. They looked ghastly and shrunken, as if they had scarce strength enough to haul at a rope.

"Now, my lads," I said, "I have been sent on board to take the command here.

I have four hands with me, and two ladies and a clergyman have been brave enough to come to nurse and help you. Where are the others?"

"The two who are down with the fever are in their bunks; the other man is seeing after them."

"Are there any dead on board?"

"Yes; the captain and first mate are lying dead aft. One died yesterday, the other two days ago. There are two or three forward. It seemed no use to bury them."

The tone in which the man spoke showed how thoroughly he had lost heart.

"Well, my lads," I said, "now you have got to bestir yourselves. I shall not let my men come on board till the ship's cleared of dead. After that they will come and make things tidy and shipshape. Just fetch up an old sail and some needles; get some shot out of the rack. First of all I will give you each some quinine."

Two bottles were handed me up from the boat, and then I cast off the rope.

"Drop behind a hundred yards or so," I said to the men, "and don't come up until I hail you."

The thought that help was at hand cheered

up the five sailors, and they set about the work with a will. One of them happened to be the sail-maker, and when the others brought up the bodies from the cabin he sewed them up roughly in canvas, with a couple of shot at their feet. As fast as they were done up we hove them overboard. In an hour it was finished. Then I hailed the boat, and when it came up told the men to come on deck.

"Mr. Williams," I said, "I shall let you tow behind for a bit until I have got things pretty straight."

Then we set to work in earnest. I flashed off a lot of gunpowder in the cabins and fo'castle, and then sluiced everything with vinegar and water. We washed down the floors and decks and everything we could get at. Then, when we had done everything we could to get the ship sweet, we hauled the boat alongside, got our passengers up, hoisted up the boat, squared our sails, and laid her head on her course.

THE MATE'S STORY.—V.

We rigged up a sort of awning, and brought the two sick men out of the fo'castle,

and slung cots for them under it, and the two ladies at once took charge of them. Then we set to work to get up a little tent for the ladies on the poop. We rigged an awning over the fo'castle for the rest of us, for I thought it better that no one should sleep below.

That night one of the sick men died, but the next day the other showed signs of mending. This was hopeful, for not one of those who had caught the fever before had recovered. The next day two men of the original crew were down with it. I can't tell you how the two ladies nursed those sick men; if they had been their own brothers they could not have done more for them. The parson helped them.

At first our hands were pretty full, as you may guess, and it was a good thing it was so, for the men had no time to think or to wonder whose turn was to come next. All hands were on duty during the day, and at night I divided them into two watches, four men in one and three in the other.

I kept on deck all night, and managed to get a sleep in the daytime. Night and morning all hands mustered for prayers; and often, as we went about our work during

the day, we could hear Jane Williams singing a hymn, as she sat beside the sick men. The calmness of the two ladies did more even than work to keep up the men's heart and courage; and even the three of the old crew still on their feet picked up and grew hopeful. Neither of the two men last attacked died; and when four days more passed without anyone else sickening, we began to think that the fever had lost its power.

But one morning, just as the dawn was stealing over the sky, Mrs. Williams came out from the little tent on the poop, and hurried up to me as I was pacing up and down by the rail. There was no need for her to speak. It was light enough to see that her face was pale and her lips quivering, and her hands in a sort of restless flutter. I knew at once that Jane Williams was down with the fever. It seemed to me as if her voice sounded from a long way off as she said:

"Will you call my husband, Mr. Thompson? I fear that our Jane is ill."

It was light enough, but I stumbled against things half a dozen times as I made my way forward and sent the parson to his

child. All that day the ship seemed under a spell. The men moved about without speaking a word, and I am sure there wasn't one of them who wouldn't have given his life for hers. It was late in the evening when Mr. Williams came forward, and taking my hand said:

"Jane wishes to speak to you."

Her mother came out of the tent as I went in. I moved up to the side of the cot on which Jane was lying, and took her hand, but I couldn't have spoken if my life depended on it. She smiled quietly up at me.

"I wanted to say good-bye, Dick. I know what you have wished for, but you see God has settled it otherwise, and He knows what is best for us. Do not grieve, dear; we shall meet again, you know!"

She died that night. Before morning a strong breeze sprang up and freshened to a gale. I didn't think we should live through it, short-handed as we were, and cared nothing whether we did or not; but I had to do my duty. We had to cut away many of the sails, for we were too weak to handle them. At last we got her under snug canvas. We ran four days before the gale, and

when it died out got sail on again, and made our way safely to the Cape.

The gale had blown the last of the fever away, and by the time we reached the Cape the three sick men were all fit for duty again. When we got there we fumigated and whitewashed her, and shipped some fresh hands and brought her home.

Uncle Dick stopped. The story was told. To him it was ended when Jane Williams died. The three girls were crying quietly, and not a word was spoken till the eldest rose from her seat, and putting her hands on his shoulders, stooped and kissed him.

"And that is the reason, Uncle Dick," she said, "why you never married?"

"I suppose so, Bessy. I have waited. You know she said we should meet again!"

THE

EXPLOSION IN THE VAUGHAN PIT.

FROM "FACING DEATH."

[Jack Simpson was a young collier working at the Vaughan pit in Lancashire. By careful attention to his work, and by private study of the science of mining, he had raised himself to the position of "viewer" or underground foreman. The mine having been found to be badly ventilated and dangerous, steps were being taken to put it right. But, as the events of the following story show, it was too late.]

One day, when Jack came up from his rounds at ten o'clock, to eat his breakfast and write up his journal of the state of the mine, he saw Mr. Brook (the owner of the mine) and the manager drive up to the pit mouth. Jack shrank back from the little window of the office where he was writing, and did not look out again until he knew that they had descended the mine; he did not wish to have any appearance of thrusting himself forward.

For another hour he wrote; and then the window of the office flew in pieces, the chairs danced, and the walls rocked, while a dull heavy roar, like distant thunder, burst upon his ears.

Jack leaped to his feet and rushed to the door. Black smoke was pouring up from the pit's mouth, sticks and pieces of wood and coal were falling in a shower in the yard; and Jack saw that his worst fears had been realized, and that a terrible explosion had taken place in the Vaughan pit.

For a moment he stood stunned. There were, he knew, over three hundred men and boys in the pit, and he turned faint and sick as the thought of their fate came across him. Then he ran towards the top of the shaft.

The bankman lay insensible at a distance of some yards from the pit, where he had been thrown by the force of the explosion. Two or three men came running up with white scared faces. The smoke had nearly ceased already; the damage was done, and a deadly stillness seemed to reign.

Jack ran into the engine-house. The engineman was leaning against a wall, scared and almost fainting.

"Are you hurt, John?"

"No!"

"Pull yourself round, man. The first thing is to see if the lift is all right. I see one of the cages is at bank, and the force of the explosion is in the upcast shaft. Just

give a turn or two to the engine and see if the winding gear is all right. Slowly."

The engineman turned on the steam; there was a slight movement, and then the engine stopped.

"A little more steam," Jack said. "The cage has caught, but it may come."

There was a jerk, and then the engine began to work.

"That is all right," Jack said, "whether the lower cage is on or not. Stop now, and wind it back, and get the other cage up again. Does the bell act, I wonder?"

Jack pulled the wire which, when in order, struck a bell at the bottom of the shaft, and then looked at a bell hanging over his head for the answer. None came.

"I expect the wire's broken," he said, and went out to the pit's mouth again.

The surface-men were all gathered round now, the tip-men, and the yard-men, and those from the coke-ovens, all looking wild and pale.

"I am going down," Jack said; "we may find some poor fellows near the bottom, and can't wait till a head-man comes on the ground. Who will go with me? I don't want any married men, for you know, lads, there may be another blow at any moment."

"I will go with you," one of the yard-men said, stepping forward; "there's no one dependent on me."

"I, too," said another; "it doesn't matter to any one but myself whether I come up again or not."

THE VAUGHAN PIT.—II.

Jack brought three safety-lamps from the lamp-room, and took his place in the cage with the two volunteers.

"Lower away," he shouted, "but go very slowly when we get near the bottom, and look out for our signal."

It was but three minutes from the moment that the cage began to sink to that when it touched the bottom of the shaft, but it seemed an age to those in it. They knew that at any moment a second explosion might come, and that they might be driven far up into the air above the top of the shaft, mere scorched fragments of flesh.

Not a word was spoken during the descent, and there was a general exclamation of "Thank God!" when they felt the cage touch the bottom.

Jack, as an official of the mine, at once took the lead.

"Now," he said, "let us push straight up the main road."

Just as they stepped out, they came across the bodies of two men, and stooped over them with their lamps.

"Both dead," Jack said; "we can do nothing for them."

A little way on were some waggons thrown together in a heap, and broken up; the body of a pony; and that of the lad, his driver. Then they came to the first door—a door no longer, not a fragment of it remaining. In the door-boy's niche the lad lay in a heap. They bent over him.

"He is alive," Jack said. "Will you two carry him to the cage? I will look round and see if there is any one else about here; beyond, this way, there is no hope. Make haste! Look how the gas is catching inside the lamps, the place is full of fire-damp."

The men took up the lad, and turned to go to the bottom of the shaft. Jack went a few yards down a cross road, and then followed them. He was in the act of turning into the next road to glance at that also, when he felt a rush of air.

"Down on your faces!" he shouted, and, springing a couple of paces farther up the cross-road, threw himself on his face.

There was a mighty roar—a thundering sound, as of an express train—a blinding light, and a scorching heat. Jack felt himself lifted from the ground by the force of the blast, and dashed down again.

Then he knew it was over, and staggered to his feet. The force of the explosion had passed along the main road, and so up the shaft, and he owed his life to the fact that he had been in the side road and off its course. He returned into the main road, but near the bottom of the shaft he was brought to a standstill.

The roof had fallen, and the passage was blocked with fragments of rock and broken waggons. He knew that the bottom of the shaft must be partly filled up, that his comrades were killed, and that there was no hope of escape in that direction. For a moment he paused to consider; then, turning up the side road to the left, he ran at full speed from the shaft.

He knew that the danger now was not so much from the fire-damp—the explosive gas—as from the even more dreaded choke-

damp, which surely follows after an explosion.

Many more miners are killed by this choke-damp, as they hasten to the bottom of the shaft after an explosion, than by the fire itself. Choke-damp, which is carbonic acid gas, is heavier than ordinary air, and thus the lowest parts of a colliery become first filled with it, as they would with water.

In all coal-mines there is a slight, sometimes a considerable, inclination, or "dip" as it is called, of the otherwise flat bed of coal. The shaft is almost always sunk at the lower end of the mine, as by this means the whole pit naturally drains to the well at the bottom of the shaft. From there it is pumped up by the engine above. The loaded waggons, too, are run down from the workings to the bottom of the shaft with comparative ease.

THE VAUGHAN PIT.—III.

The explosion had, as Jack well knew, destroyed all the doors which direct the currents of the air, and the ventilation had entirely ceased. The lower part of the mine, where the explosion had been strongest,

would soon be filled with choke-damp, and Jack was making for the old workings, near the upper boundary line of the pit. There the air would remain pure long after it had become poisonous elsewhere.

It was in this quarter of the mine that Bill Haden (Jack's adopted father) and some twenty other colliers worked.

Presently Jack saw lights ahead, and heard a clattering of steps. It was clear that, as he had hoped, the miners working there had escaped the force of the explosion, which had, without doubt, played awful havoc in the parts of the mine where the greater part of the men were at work.

"Stop! stop!" Jack shouted, as they came up to him.

"Is it fire, Jack?" Bill Haden, who was one of the first, asked.

"Yes, Bill; didn't you feel it?"

"Some of us thought we felt a suck of air a quarter hour since, but we weren't sure; and then came another, which blew out the lights. Come along, lad; there is no time for talking."

"It's of no use going on," Jack said; "the shaft's choked up. I came down after the first blow, and I fear there's no living soul

in the new workings. By this time they must be full of the choke-damp."

The men looked at each other with blank faces.

"Have you seen Brook?" Jack asked eagerly.

"Yes, he passed our stall with Johnstone ten minutes ago, just before the blast came."

"We may catch him in time to stop him yet," Jack said, "if he has gone round to look at the walling of the old workings. There are three men at work there."

"I'll go with you, Jack," Bill Haden said. "Our best place is my stall, lads," he went on, turning to the others; "that is pretty well the highest ground in the pit, and the air will keep good there as long as anywhere —maybe till help comes. You come along with us, mate," he said, turning to the man who worked with him in his stall.

As they hurried along, Jack, in a few words, told what had taken place, as far as he knew it. Five minutes' run brought them to the place where the masons were at work walling up the entrance to some old workings. They looked astonished at the newcomers.

"Have you seen Mr. Brook?"

"Yes, he and the manager have just gone on. There, don't you see their lights down the heading? No? Well, I saw them a moment since."

"Come along," Jack said. "Quick! I expect they've met it."

At full speed they hurried along. Presently they all stopped short; the lights burnt low, and a choking sensation came on them.

"Back, Jack, for your life!" gasped Bill Haden; but at that moment Jack's feet struck something, which he knew was a body.

"Down at my feet; help!" he cried.

He stooped and tried to raise the body. Then the last gleam of his light went out—his lungs seemed to cease acting, and he saw no more.

THE VAUGHAN PIT.—IV.

When he came to himself again he was being carried on Bill Haden's shoulder.

"All right, dad!" he said. "I am coming round now; put me down."

"That's a good job, Jack. I thought you would scarce come round again."

"Have you got either of the others?"

"We've got Brook; you had your arm round him so tight that Ned and I lifted you together. He's on ahead; the masons are carrying him, and Ned is showing the way. Can you walk now?"

"Yes, I'm better now. How did you manage to breathe, dad?"

"We didn't breathe, Jack; we're too old hands for that. When we saw you fall we just drew back, took a breath, and then shut our mouths, and went down for you just the same as if we'd been a groping for you under water. We got hold of you both, lifted you up, and carried you along as far as we could before we drew a breath again. You're sharp, Jack, but you don't know everything yet."

And Bill Haden chuckled to find that for once his practical experience taught him something that Jack had not learned from his books.

Jack now hurried along after Bill Haden, and in a few minutes reached the place fixed upon. Here the miners were engaged in restoring Mr. Brook, who was just beginning to show signs of life. It was not until Mr. Brook was able to sit up that they began to talk about the future.

Jack's account of the state of things near the shaft was listened to gravely. The fact that the whole of the ventilation had been put out of order, and the proof given by the second explosion that the mine was somewhere on fire, were understood. It sounded their death-knell.

Gallant and unceasing would be the efforts made under any other circumstance to rescue them. But the fact that the pit was on fire, and that fresh explosions might at any moment take place, would make it an act of simple madness for their friends above to try to clear the shaft and headings, and to restore the ventilation.

The fact was further made clear by a sudden flicker of the lamps, and a faint shake, followed by a distant rumble.

"Another blast," Bill Haden said. "That settles us, lads. We may as well turn out all the lamps but two, so as to have light as long as we last out."

"Is there no hope?" Mr. Brook asked presently, coming forward after he had heard from Haden's mate the manner in which he had been so far saved.

"None, master," said Bill Haden. "We are like rats in a trap; and it would have

been kinder of us if we had let you lie as you were."

"Your intention was equally kind," Mr. Brook said. "But is there nothing that we can do?"

"Nothing," Bill Haden said. "We have got our dinners with us, and might make them last, a mouthful at a time, to keep life in us for a week or more. But what would be the use of it? It may be weeks—ay, or months—before they can stifle the fire and make their way here."

"Can you suggest nothing, Jack?" Mr. Brook asked. "You are the only officer of the pit left now," he added with a faint smile.

Jack had not spoken since he reached the stall, but had sat down on a block of coal, with his elbows on his knees and his chin on his hands—a favourite attitude of his when thinking deeply.

THE VAUGHAN PIT.—V.

The other colliers had thrown themselves down on the ground; some sobbed as they thought of their loved ones above, some lay in silence.

Jack answered by rising to his feet.

"Yes, sir, I think we may do something."

The men raised themselves in surprise.

"In the first place, sir, I should send men in each direction to see how near the choke-damp has got. There are four roads by which it could come up. I would shut the doors on this side of the places it has got to, roll blocks of coal and rubbish to keep them tight, and stop up the chinks with wet mud. That will keep the gas from coming up, and there is air enough in the stalls and headings to last us a long time."

"But that would only prolong our lives for a few days, Jack, and I don't know that would be any advantage. Better to be choked by the gas than to die of starvation," Mr. Brook said; and a murmur from the men showed that they agreed with him.

"I vote for lighting our pipes," one of the miners said. "If there is fiery gas here, it would be better to finish with it at once."

There was a general expression of approval.

"Wait!" Jack said; "wait till I have done. You know, Mr. Brook, we are close to our north boundary here, in some places

within a very few yards. Now the 'Logan,' which lies next to us, has been worked out years ago. Of course it is full of water, and it was from fear of tapping that water that the works were stopped here.

"A good deal comes in through the coal in No. 15 stall, which I expect is nearest to it. Now if we could work into the 'Logan,' the water would rush down into our workings, and, as our pit is a good deal bigger than the 'Logan' ever was, it will fill the lower workings and put out the fire, but won't reach us here.

"Then we can get up through the 'Logan,' where the air is sure to be all right, as the water will bring good air down with it. We may not do it in time, but it is a chance. What do you say, sir?"

"It is worth trying, at any rate," Mr. Brook said. "Bravo, my lad! your clear head may save us yet.

"Now, lads," Mr. Brook continued, "Jack Simpson is master now, and we will all work under his orders. But before we begin, boys, let us say a prayer. We are in God's hands; let us ask His protection."

Every head was bared, and the men stood reverently while, in a few words, Mr. Brook

prayed for strength and protection, and rescue from their danger.

"Now, Jack," he said when he had finished, "give your orders."

Jack at once sent off two men along each of the roads to find how near the choke-damp had approached, and to block up and seal the doors. It was necessary to strike a light to relight some of the lamps, but this was a danger that could not be helped.

The rest of the men were sent round to all the places where work had been going on, to bring in the tools and dinners to No. 15 stall, to which Jack himself, Bill Haden, and Mr. Brook proceeded at once.

No work had been done there for years. The floor was covered with a black mud, and a close examination of the face showed tiny streamlets of water trickling down in several places. It was therefore determined to begin work in No. 15.

"You don't mean to use powder, Jack?" Bill Haden asked.

"No, dad; without any ventilation we should be choked with the smoke, and there would be the danger from the gas. When we think we are getting near the water we will put in a big shot, so as to blow in the face."

THE VAUGHAN PIT.—VI.

When the men returned with the tools and the dinners, the latter done up in handkerchiefs, Jack asked Mr. Brook to take charge of the food.

"There are just twenty of us, sir, without you, and nineteen dinners. So if you divide among us four dinners a day it will last for five days, and by that time I hope we shall be free."

Four men only could work at the face of the stall together, and Jack divided the twenty into five sets.

"We will work in quarter-of-an-hour shifts at first," he said; "that will give an hour's rest to a quarter of an hour's work, and a man can work well, we know, for a quarter of an hour. When we get done up we will have half-hour shifts, which will give two hours for a sleep in between."

The men of the first shift set to work without an instant's delay. The vigour and swiftness with which the blows fell upon the face of the rock told that the men who struck them were working for life or death.

Jack took the others into the next stalls and set them to work to clear a narrow strip

of the floor next to the upper wall. They were then to cut a little groove in the rocky floor to catch the water as it slowly trickled in, and lead it to small hollows which they were to make in the solid rock. The water coming through the two stalls would, thus collected, be ample for their wants.

Jack then started to see how the men at work at the doors were getting on. These had already nearly finished their tasks. On the road leading to the main workings choke-damp had been met with at a distance of fifty yards from the stall; but upon the upper road it was several hundred yards before it was found.

On the other two roads it was over a hundred yards. The men had torn strips off their flannel jackets and had thrust them into the crevices of the doors, and had then plastered mud from the roadway thickly on. There was now no reason to fear any new rush of choke-damp, unless, indeed, an explosion should take place so violent as to blow in the doors.

This, however, was unlikely, as, with a fire burning, the gas would ignite as it came out; and although there might be many smaller explosions, there would scarcely be

one so serious as the first two which had taken place.

The work at the doors and the water being over, the men all gathered in the stall. Then Jack insisted on an equal division of the tobacco, of which almost all the miners possessed some.

Now that they were together again, all the lamps were put out save the two required by the men at work. With work to be done, and a hope of ultimate escape, the men's spirits rose, and between their spells they talked, and now and then even a laugh was heard.

Mr. Brook, although unable to do a share of the work, was very valuable in aiding to keep up their spirits, by his hopeful talk, and by stories of people who had been in great danger in many ways in different parts of the world, but who had at last escaped.

Sometimes one or other of the men would propose a hymn, and then their deep voices would rise together, while the blows of the sledges and picks would keep time to the swing of the tune.

On the advice of Mr. Brook the men divided their portions of food, small as they were, into two parts, one to be eaten every

twelve hours; for as the work would proceed night and day, it was better to eat, however little, every twelve hours, than to go twenty-four without food.

THE VAUGHAN PIT.—VII.

The first twenty-four hours over, the stall —or rather the heading, for it was now driven as narrow as it was possible for four men to work at once—had greatly advanced; indeed it would have been difficult even for a miner to believe that so much work had been done in the time.

There was, however, no change in the appearances; the water still trickled in, but they could not see that it came faster than before. As fast as the coal fell it was removed by one of the men who were next for work, so that there was not a minute lost from this cause.

During the next twenty-four hours almost as much work was done as during the first; but upon the third there was a decided falling off. The scanty food was telling upon them now.

The shifts were lengthened to an hour to allow longer time for sleep between each

spell of work; and each set of men, when relieved, threw themselves down exhausted, and slept for three hours, until it was their turn to wake up and remove the coal as the set at work got it down.

At the end of seventy-two hours the water was coming through the face much faster than at first. The old miners, accustomed to judge by sound, were of opinion that the wall in front sounded less solid, and that they were coming to the old workings of the Logan pit.

In the three days and nights they had driven the heading nearly fifteen yards from the point where they had begun. Upon the fourth day they worked carefully, driving a borer three feet ahead of them into the coal, as in case of the water bursting through suddenly they would all be drowned.

At the end of ninety hours from the time of striking the first blow the drill which, Jack holding it, Bill Haden was just driving in deeper with a sledge, suddenly went forward, and as suddenly flew out as if shot from a gun, followed by a jet of water driven with tremendous force.

A plug, which had been prepared in readiness, was with difficulty driven into the hole;

two men who had been knocked down by the force of the water were picked up much bruised and hurt; and with thankful hearts that the end of their labour was at hand all prepared for the last part of their task.

After an earnest thanksgiving by Mr. Brook for their success thus far, the whole party partook of what was a heartier meal than usual, consisting of the whole of the remaining food. Then choosing the largest of the drills, a hole was driven in the coal two feet in depth, and in this an unusually heavy charge was placed.

"We're done for after all," Bill Haden suddenly exclaimed. "Look at the lamp!"

Every one present felt his heart sink at what he saw. A light flame seemed to fill the whole interior of the lamp. To strike a match to light the fuse would be to cause an instant explosion of the gas. The place where they were working being the highest part of the mine, the fiery gas, which made its way out of the coal at all points above the closed doors, had, being lighter than air, mounted there.

"Put the lamps out," Jack said quickly; "the gauze is nearly red-hot." In a moment they were in darkness.

THE VAUGHAN PIT.—VIII.

"What is to be done now?" Mr. Brook asked after a pause.

There was silence for a while—the case seemed desperate.

"Mr. Brook," Jack said after a time, "it is agreed, is it not, that all here will obey my orders?"

"Yes, certainly, Jack," Mr. Brook answered.

"Whatever they are?"

"Yes, whatever they are."

"Very well," Jack said, "you will all take your coats off and soak them in water, then all set to work to beat the gas out of this heading as far as possible. When that is done as far as can be done, all go into the next stall, and lie down at the upper end; you will be out of the way of the explosion there. Cover your heads with your wet coats, and, Bill, wrap something wet round those cans of powder."

"What then, Jack?"

"That's all," Jack said; "I will fire the train. If the gas explodes at the match it will light the fuse, so that the wall will blow in anyhow."

"No, no," a chorus of voices said; "you will be killed."

"I will light it, Jack," Bill Haden said; "I am getting on now, it's no great odds about me."

"No, dad," Jack said; "I am in charge, and it is for me to do it. You have all promised to obey orders, so set about it at once. Bill, take Mr. Brook up first into the other stall; he won't be able to find his way about in the dark."

Without a word Bill did as he was told, Mr. Brook giving one hearty squeeze to the lad's hand as he was led away. The others, accustomed to the darkness from boyhood, proceeded at once to carry out Jack's instructions, wetting their flannel jackets and then beating the roof with them towards the entrance to the stall; for five minutes they continued this, and then Jack said:

"Now, lads, off to the stall as quick as you can; cover your heads well over; lie down. I will be with you in a minute, or—" or, as Jack knew well, he would be dashed to pieces by the explosion of the gas.

He listened until the sound of the last footstep died away—waited a couple of minutes, to allow them to get safely in position

at the other end of the next stall—and then, holding the end of the fuse in one hand and the match in the other, he murmured a prayer, and, stooping to the ground, struck the match.

No explosion followed; he applied it to the fuse, and ran for his life down the narrow heading, down the stall, along the horse road, and up the next stall. "It's alight," he said as he rushed in.

A cheer burst from the men. "Cover your heads close," Jack said as he threw himself down; "the explosion is sure to fire the gas."

For a minute a silence as of death reigned in the mine; then there was a sharp cracking explosion, followed by another like thunder, and, while a flash of fire seemed to surround them, filling the air, firing their clothes, and scorching their limbs, the whole mine shook with a deep roaring.

The men knew that the danger was at an end, threw off the covering from their heads, and struck out the fire from their garments. Some were badly burned about the legs, but any word or cry they may have uttered was drowned in the tremendous roar which continued.

It was the water from the Logan pit rush-

ing into the Vaughan. For five minutes the noise was like thunder; then, as the pressure from behind decreased, the sound gradually grew less, until, in another five minutes, all was quiet.

THE VAUGHAN PIT.—IX.

Then the men rose to their feet. The air in the next stall was clear and fresh, for as the Logan pit had emptied of water, fresh air had of course come down from the surface to take its place.

"We can light our lamps again safely now," Bill Haden said. "We shall want our tools, lads, and the powder; there may be some heavy falls in our way, and we may have hard work yet before we get to the shaft, but the roof rock is strong, so I believe we shall make our way."

"It lies to our right," Jack said. "Like our own, it is at the lower end of the pit, so, as long as we don't mount, we are going right for it."

There were, as Haden had expected, many heavy falls of the roof, but the water had swept passages in them, and it was found easier to get along than the colliers had

expected. Still it was hard work for men weakened by hunger; and it took them five hours of labour clearing away masses of rock, and floundering through black mud, often three feet deep, before they made their way to the bottom of the Logan shaft. Then they saw the light far above them—the light that at one time they had never expected to see again.

"What o'clock is it now, sir?" Bill Haden asked Mr. Brook, who had from the beginning been the time-keeper of the party.

"Twelve o'clock exactly," he replied. "It is four days and an hour since the pit caught fire."

"What day is it, sir? for I've lost all count of time."

"Sunday," Mr. Brook said after a moment's thought.

"It could not be better," Bill Haden said; "for there will be thousands of people from all round to visit the mine."

"How much powder have you, Bill?" Jack asked.

"Four twenty-pound cans."

"Let us let off ten pounds at a time," Jack said. "Just damp it enough to prevent it from flashing off too suddenly; break

up fine some of this damp wood and mix with it, it will add to the smoke."

In a few minutes the powder was ready, and a light applied; it blazed furiously for half a minute, sending volumes of light smoke up the shaft.

"Flash off a couple of pounds of dry powder," Bill Haden said; "there is very little draught up the shaft, and it will drive the air up."

For twenty minutes they continued flashing powder. Then they stopped and allowed the shaft to clear altogether of the smoke.

Presently a small stone fell among them —another—and another, and they knew that some one had noticed the smoke.

[It was indeed true. Their smoke signal had been seen and understood, and before long they were all drawn safely to the surface.

It may be imagined what excitement there was. Women crowded about Jack, calling down blessings on him for saving their husbands, and sons, and sweethearts, from death. And Mr. Brook was not slow to recognize his bravery and skill. He knew that if Jack's suggestions had been attended to, the explosion might not have happened; and so the young collier was made manager of the mine.]

THE RED CAPTAIN.

FROM "ONE OF THE 28TH."

[Ralph Conway, a young officer of the 28th Regiment, was stationed with a detachment on the south coast of Ireland. News was obtained that a notorious gang, led by a ruffian known as the Red Captain, was in hiding among some cliffs. The news came from a woman whose husband had, against his will, been forced to join the band.

Captain O'Connor, Lieutenant Desmond, and Ralph started quietly before daylight in hopes of surprising the gang before they could get news from their friends inland of the intended attack; while it was arranged that a revenue-officer, with a boat-load of men, should cut off their escape by sea.]

Daylight was faintly breaking when they reached the edge of the cliff. Ralph, with ten men, was posted at the spot where a slight track was visible, going down into a sort of gulley. Captain O'Connor then proceeded with half the company to the right, Desmond taking the remainder to the left; each posting men at intervals along the edge of the cliff, and placing parties of four at every point where there appeared the smallest probability of an ascent being made.

All were ordered to load at once. They were to seize anyone coming up the cliff,

and in case of resistance to fire without hesitation. The two officers then returned to the spot where they had left Ralph. It was now nearly broad daylight. Leaving the soldiers they went a short distance to a point where the rocks fell away precipitately, and from here had a clear view of the face of the cliffs.

"We had better wait here for a time," the captain said. "The chances are that before long one of them will come out from their hiding-place, and perhaps make his way up to the top to look round. If he does, that will give us an indication as to the direction at any rate of their hiding-place. Now, I will take the ground in front; do you watch to the left, Conway, and you to the right, Desmond. We had better lie down, for on this jutting point we may catch the eye of anyone down there before we can see him. Keep a sharp look-out, lads; it will save us a world of trouble if we can see one of them."

For half an hour they lay quiet, then Desmond suddenly exclaimed:

"There is a man among those fallen rocks half-way up the side. There! he is gone. Perhaps we shall see him again in a moment."

For five minutes they lay with their eyes

fixed on the rocks that Desmond pointed out, but there were no signs of life.

"Are you sure you were not mistaken, Desmond?" O'Connor asked.

"Quite certain. He suddenly appeared by the side of that gray boulder, stood there for a moment, and sunk down again. I expect he must have got a view of one of the men somewhere along the top."

"We will wait another ten minutes," O'Connor said, "and then we will take a party to the spot and search it thoroughly. There is the coast-guard boat, so there is no fear of their getting away by water."

Another quarter of an hour passed.

"It is no use waiting any longer. Go along the line, one each way, and bring ten men from points where they can be spared. We will leave them at the top of the path and take the party there down with us. There are only four or five of them, and ten men besides ourselves are ample for the business."

THE RED CAPTAIN.—II.

The arrangements were soon made. Before starting on the descent O'Connor said

to the men: "We wish to take the fellows who are hiding down there alive if possible. They are the gang of the fellow known as the 'Red Captain,' and have committed a score of murders; but if it is absolutely necessary you will of course fire. There is one man among them who is there on compulsion, and is less guilty than the rest. He is a fair-haired man, and I should think you would notice the difference between him and the others. Whatever resistance they make it is not probable that he will join in it.

"At any rate, do not fire at him unless it is absolutely necessary to save your own lives. Now see to your priming before we start, and fix bayonets. Mind how you climb over these rocks, because if any of you fall, your musket may go off and shoot someone in front of you. Wherever it is possible scatter out abreast of each other, so as to prevent the possibility of accident. Now, then, march!"

Leading the way, Captain O'Connor descended the little track. It extended but a short distance. Beyond that a chaos of fallen rocks—the remains of an old landslip—stretched away to the shore.

"There is no working along this side-

ways, Desmond," Captain O'Connor said, after they had climbed along for some little distance. "We had better make straight down to the shore, follow that for a bit, and then mount again to the spot where you saw the man."

It was difficult work, but at last the party reached the shore. Lieutenant Adcock, who was in command of the boat, had watched the party making their way down the rocks, and now rowed in to within a few yards of them.

"Good morning, lieutenant!" Captain O'Connor said. "I think we have got them fairly trapped; but doubtless they would have made off if they hadn't seen you on the watch outside. It's that notorious scoundrel the Red Captain of Galway who is, I hear, hiding here with his gang."

"Indeed!" the revenue-officer said; "that will be a capture worth making. Shall I come ashore with four of my men? I expect they are more accustomed to climbing about among the rocks than yours are, and I should like to lend a hand."

"Do, by all means," Captain O'Connor replied. "I see you have got ten, and six will be quite enough in the boat, even if

they do manage to get down and embark, which I don't think they will. Your men are all armed, I suppose?"

"Yes; they have all carbines and cutlasses. Now, coxswain, I leave you in charge. Row out a quarter of a mile, and if any boat pushes off you are to stop it and arrest all on board. They will almost certainly resist, and in that case you must use your arms. Now, the four bow-oars get out and step ashore."

THE RED CAPTAIN.—III.

When the lieutenant and his four men had landed, the boat again pushed off, and the party on shore made their way along over the rocks at the edge of the water, until they were opposite the rock where Lieutenant Desmond had seen the man appear. Then the ascent was commenced. The four officers went first, the men following in a line.

"Bear a little to the left," Captain O'Connor said; "it is likely to lie somewhere in that direction. The man we saw would have been making towards the path and not from it. Keep a sharp look-out between

these great rocks; there is no saying where the entrance to their hiding-place may be."

Almost as he spoke there was a sharp crack of a rifle, and the bullet struck the rock on which he was standing.

"Come on, lads!" he shouted, "the sooner we are there the less time they have got to fire;" and with a cheer the men hurried forward, scrambling recklessly over the rocks. Again and again puffs of smoke darted out from the rocks in front; and one of the soldiers fell, shot through the heart.

"Don't stop to fire!" Captain O'Connor shouted as a yell of rage broke from the men; "you will do no good, and it will only give them more time."

A dozen more shots were fired. One of the coast-guard men was shot through the shoulder; but this was the only casualty, for the quick movements of the men as they scrambled over the boulders disconcerted the aim of those above. Breathless and panting the four officers gained the spot from which the shots had been fired, the men close up behind them; but not a soul was to be seen.

"Wait a moment till you get breath, lads," their leader said. "They can't be far

from here. We will find their hiding-place presently, never fear."

As they stood panting there was a shout from above. The soldiers were standing along the edge of the cliff, looking down upon the fight. Sergeant Morris waved his arm.

"They have made away to your left, sir!" he shouted at the top of his voice. "We have just caught sight of them among the rocks!"

In two or three minutes Captain O'Connor led the way in that direction.

"Keep your eyes sharply about, lads. No doubt the place is cunningly hidden. Search among every clump of bushes between the rocks."

Presently the sergeant shouted down again from above:

"I think you are far enough now, sir! We did not catch sight of them beyond that!"

For an hour the search continued, but without avail.

"They must be here somewhere, lads," Captain O'Connor said. "We will find them if we have to stop here a week, and have provisions brought down from the village.

It's pretty evident there is no opening between the great rocks or we must have found it. We must examine the smaller boulders. They may have one so placed that it can be dropped down over the entrance. That flat slab is a likely looking place, for instance. Three or four of you get hold of it and heave it up."

The men gathered round to lift it. Ralph stooped down and peeped under as they did so.

"Hurrah!" he shouted, "there is an opening here."

Several of the others now got hold of the stone. It was up-ended and thrown backwards, and the entrance to a passage some three feet high and two feet wide was revealed.

THE RED CAPTAIN.—IV.

"I can smell a peat fire!" one of the men exclaimed.

"This is the entrance, no doubt," Captain O'Connor said. "See, the bottom is evidently worn by feet. The passage must have been used for a long time; but it's an awkward place to follow desperate men into."

"It is, indeed," Lieutenant Adcock agreed. "They could shoot us down one by one as we go in. They would see us against the light, while we should be able to make out nothing."

"Surrender in there!" Captain O'Connor shouted. "You can't get away; and I promise you all a fair trial."

His summons was followed by a taunting laugh; and a moment later there was a sharp sound within, and a rifle-bullet struck the side of the entrance and flew out.

"It would be throwing away one's life to go in there," Captain O'Connor said. "At any rate we have got them secure, and they must come out in time. But it would be madness to crawl in there on one's hands and feet to be picked off by those scoundrels at their ease. Now, lads, two of you stand by this entrance. Keep out of the line of fire, and be ready with your bayonets to run anyone through who comes out. Let the rest scatter and search round this place. They may have another entrance. If so, we must find it. In the first place, it may be easier of entry; in the second, they might escape from it after dark."

Again the search began.

"Do you think it is likely to be higher up or lower down, O'Connor?" Lieutenant Desmond asked.

"There is no saying, Desmond. But as the passage seems to go straight in, I should fancy above rather than below."

For a long time they searched without success; then Ralph, who had gone higher up the rocks than the rest, came upon a clump of low bushes growing between some large boulders. There was nothing suspicious about them, and he was just turning away when he perceived a slight odour of peat smoke.

Silently he made his way down to the captain.

"I have found another entrance," he said. "At any rate I think so; for I certainly smelt smoke. If we go quietly we may take them unawares."

Captain O'Connor passed the word along for the men to gather silently, and Ralph then led the way up to the clump of bushes.

"Yes, I can smell the peat plainly enough. Now, Conway, do you search among the bushes. Carefully, lad; we don't know what the place is like."

Cautiously Ralph pushed the bushes aside.

He saw at once that these had been carefully trained to cover a large hole. This was about three feet wide, and descended at a sharp angle, forming a sloping passage of sufficient height for a man to stand upright. Captain O'Connor knelt down and looked in.

"This looks more possible," he said; "but it's very steep. I should say it is not used by them, but acts as a sort of chimney to ventilate the cavern and let the smoke out. At any rate we will try it; but we must take our boots off so as to get a better hold on the rocks, besides we shall make less noise. Blunt and Jervis, do you go down to the other entrance again. It is likely enough that they may try to make a bolt that way if they hear us coming. Keep a sharp look-out down there, and be sure no one escapes."

"Don't you think, Captain O'Connor, that it will be a good thing to enter from there also the moment a row is heard going on within. Their attention will be taken up with your attack, and we may get in without being noticed."

"That's a very good idea, Conway; and you shall carry it out. Take two more men with you, and make your way in as soon as you hear us engaged. But remember that it

is quite possible we may not be able to get down. This passage may get almost perpendicular presently; and though I mean to go if possible, even if I have a straight drop for it, it may close up and be altogether impracticable. So don't you try to enter till you are quite sure they are engaged with us, otherwise you will be only throwing away your life."

"I understand, sir," Ralph said as he turned to go off. "If you get in you can reckon on our assistance immediately; if not, we shall make no move."

THE RED CAPTAIN.—V.

Ralph now took up his station at the mouth of the cavern with his six men, and lay down just in front of the opening listening attentively. He could hear a continued murmur as of many voices.

"Get ready, lads, to follow me the instant you see me dive in," he said. "I am sure by the sound there are more than four men in there, and Captain O'Connor may want help badly."

Grasping a pistol in his left hand, and his sword in his right, Ralph listened attentively.

Suddenly he heard a shout, and then the discharge of a gun or a pistol.

In an instant he threw himself forward along the low narrow passage. He had not gone more than three or four yards when he found that it heightened, and he was able to stand upright. He rushed on, keeping his head low in case the roof should lower again. and after a few paces entered a large cabin. It was dimly illuminated by two torches stuck against the wall. In a moment a number of figures rushed towards him with loud shouts; but before they reached him two of the soldiers stood by his side.

"Fire!" he shouted as he discharged his pistol; and at the same moment the soldiers beside him fired their muskets.

A moment later he was engaged in a fierce hand-to-hand conflict. Several firearms had flashed off almost in his face. One of the soldiers fell with a sharp cry, but those who were following rushed forward. Ralph narrowly escaped having his brains dashed out by a clubbed rifle, but springing back just in time he ran his opponent through before he could recover his guard.

Just at this moment a big man with a shock of red hair and a huge beard levelled a blun-

derbuss at him. It flashed across him that his last moment had come; when a man behind leapt suddenly upon the ruffian's back and they fell to the ground together, the blunderbuss going off in the fall and riddling a soldier standing next to Ralph with slugs.

For two or three minutes a desperate struggle went on between Ralph and his six men and those who attempted to break through them. Sturdily as the soldiers fought they had been driven back towards the entrance by the assailants, armed with pikes and clubbed guns. There was no sound of conflict at the other end of the cave, and Ralph felt that the attack there had for some reason failed.

"Shoulder to shoulder, lads!" he shouted. "We shall have help in a minute or two."

He had emptied both his double-barrelled pistols. His sword had just broken short in his hand while guarding his head from a heavy blow. He himself had been almost struck to the ground, when there was a rush of men from behind, and the rest of the soldiers poured in.

"Give them a volley, lads!" he shouted; "and then charge them with the bayonets!"

The muskets rang out, and then there was

a shout of "We surrender! we surrender!" A minute later the men were disarmed.

THE RED CAPTAIN.—VI.

There was still a desperate struggle going on on the ground.

"Here, lads," Ralph said to two of his men. "Secure this red fellow, he is their leader. One of you bring a torch here."

The light was brought. It was seen that the man who had sprung upon the Red Captain's back had pinioned his arms to his sides, and held them there in spite of the efforts of the ruffian to free himself. Two of the soldiers took off their belts and fastened them together, passed them between the back of the man and his captor, and then strapped his arms firmly to his side. The man who held them then released his grip.

"Stand over him with fixed bayonets, and if he moves run him through. Now, where's Captain O'Connor?"

"I don't know, sir. He and Mr. Desmond and the lieutenant went down the hole in front of us. We were following when the naval officer shouted up to us to run round

to this entrance and make our way in there, for he could go no further."

"I am here, Conway," a faint voice said from the other end of the cabin; "but I have broken my leg, I think, and Desmond has knocked all the wind out of my body."

Ralph hastened to the spot from whence the voice came, and found Captain O'Connor lying on the ground, and Lieutenant Desmond insensible beside him.

"What has happened?" Ralph exclaimed. "Have they shot you?"

"No. Hold the torch up and you will see the way we came."

The soldier did so, and Ralph, looking up, saw a hole in the top of the cave twenty feet above.

"You don't mean to say you came through there, O'Connor?"

"I did, worse luck to it?" O'Connor said. "The passage got steeper and steeper, and at last my foot slipped, and I shot down, and came plump into the middle of a peat fire; and a moment later Desmond shot down on to the top of me. We scattered the fire all over the place, as you can imagine; but I burnt my hands and face, and I believe

the leg of my breeches is on fire—something is hurting me furiously."

"Yes, it is all smouldering!" Ralph exclaimed, putting it out with his hands.

"Have you got them all?" Captain O'Connor asked.

"Every one; not one has made his escape. It would have fared badly with us, though, if Lieutenant Adcock had not sent down the men to our assistance."

A WIFE'S STRATAGEM.

FROM "IN FREEDOM'S CAUSE."

[This story concerns the interesting period of Scottish history when Robert the Bruce was slowly wresting Scotland from the power of England. The great Edward I. ("Longshanks, the Hammer of the Scots") had died, and his son, Edward II., had succeeded him, and was advancing to Scotland with the immense army that was to meet destruction at Bannockburn.

Archie Forbes, a Scottish gentleman who had fought under Wallace and Bruce, was made prisoner by the English and taken to Berwick Castle, where he was confined in a cage fixed outside the wall, and opening into a small cell in which he passed the night. During the daytime he remained in the cage in sight of the passers-by.]

The position of the cage was about twenty-five feet above the moat. The moat itself was some forty feet wide, a public path ran along the other side, and people passing here had a full view of the prisoner. There were still many of Scottish birth in the town, in spite of the efforts which Edward had made to convert it into a complete English colony; and although the English were in the majority, Archie was subject to but little insult or annoyance.

Although for the present in English pos-

session, Berwick had always been a Scotch town, and might yet again by the fortune of war fall into Scottish hands. Therefore even those most hostile to them felt that it would be prudent to refrain from any demonstrations against the Scottish prisoners; since in the event of the city again changing hands a fearful retaliation might be dealt them.

Occasionally a passing boy would shout out a word of contempt or hatred, or throw a stone at the prisoner, but such trifles were unheeded by him. More often men or women passing would stop and gaze up at him with pitying looks, and would go away wiping their eyes.

Archie, after the first careful examination of his cell, at once abandoned any idea of escape from it. The massive bars would have defied the strength of twenty men, and he had no instrument of any sort with which he could cut them. There was, he felt, nothing before him but death; and although he feared this little for himself, he felt sad indeed as he thought of the grief of Marjory and his mother.

The days passed slowly. Five had gone without an incident, and but two remained.

He knew that there was no chance of any change in the sentence which Edward had passed, even were his son (Edward II.) more disposed than Edward himself had been towards merciful measures to the Scots. That this would be the case Archie had no warrant for supposing.

The new king's time would be too closely engaged in the affairs of state, the arrangement of his father's funeral, and the details of the army advancing against Scotland, to give a thought to the prisoner whose fate had been determined by his father.

Absorbed in his own thoughts Archie seldom looked across the moat, and paid no heed to those who passed or who paused to look at him.

On the afternoon of the fifth day, however, his eye was caught by two women who were gazing up at the cage.

In a moment he started violently and almost gave a cry, for in one of them he recognized his wife, Marjory. The instant that the women saw that he had observed them they turned away and walked carelessly and slowly along the road.

A WIFE'S STRATAGEM.—II.

Archie could hardly believe that his eyesight had not deceived him. It seemed impossible that Marjory, whom he deemed a hundred miles away, in his castle at Aberfilly, should be here in the town of Berwick, and yet when he thought it over he saw that it might well be so.

There was indeed ample time for her to have made the journey two or three times, while he had been lying in prison at Port-Patrick awaiting a ship. She would be sure, when the news reached her of his capture, that he would be taken to Edward at Carlisle, and that he would be either executed there or at Berwick. It was then by no means impossible, strange and wondrous as it appeared to him, that Marjory should be in Berwick.

She was attired in the garment of a peasant woman of the better class, such as the wife of a small crofter or farmer. Remembering that she had saved his life before at Dunstaffnage, Archie felt that she had come hither to try to rescue him.

Archie's heart beat with delight, and his eyes filled with tears at the devotion and

courage of Marjory. For the first time since he had been hurried into the boat on the night of his capture, a feeling of hope entered his breast.

Momentary as the glance had been which he had obtained of the face of Marjory's companion, Archie had perceived that it was in some way familiar to him. In vain he recalled the features of the various servants at Aberfilly, and those of the wives and daughters of the retainers of the estate; he could not recognize the face of the woman accompanying Marjory as belonging to any of them.

His wife might, indeed, have brought with her some one from the estates at Ayr whom she had known from a child, but in that case Archie could not account for his knowledge of her. This, however, did not occupy his mind many minutes; it was assuredly one whom Marjory trusted, and that was sufficient for him. Then his thoughts turned wholly to his wife.

Anyone who had noticed the prisoner's manner for the last few days would have been struck with the change which had come over it. Hitherto he had stood, often for hours, leaning motionless, with his arms

crossed, in the corner of his cage, with head bent down and listless air, his thoughts only being busy. Now he paced restlessly up and down his narrow limits, two steps each way and then a turn, like a caged beast. His hands were clenched, his breast heaved, his breath came fast, his head was thrown back; often he brushed his hand across his eyes, and rapid words came from his lips.

The sun sank. An hour later a jailer brought his jug of water and piece of bread, and then, without a word, retired, leaving, as usual, the door into the cell open, but carefully locking and barring the inner door. Archie had a longer walk now, from the front of the cage to the back of the cell, and for three hours he paced up and down.

A WIFE'S STRATAGEM.—III.

Sometimes he paused and listened attentively. The sounds in the town gradually died away and all became still, save that he could hear the calls of the warder on the battlement above him. The night was a very dark one, and he could scarcely make out the gleam of water in the moat below.

Suddenly something struck him a sharp

blow on the face and fell at his feet. He stooped and picked it up; it was an arrow with a wad of wool fastened round its point to prevent it from making a noise should it strike the wall or cage; to the other end was attached a piece of string. Archie drew it in until he felt that it was held firmly, then after a moment the hold relaxed somewhat, and the string again yielded as he drew it in.

Presently a stout rope, strong enough to bear his weight, came into his hands. At the point of junction was attached some object done up in flannel. This he opened, and found that it was a fine saw and a small bottle containing oil. He fastened the rope securely to one of the bars and at once commenced to saw asunder one of the others.

In five minutes two cuts had been noiselessly made, and a portion of the bar five feet long came away. He now tried the rope and found that it was tightly stretched, and evidently fixed to some object on the other side of the moat. He grasped it firmly with his arms and legs and slid rapidly down it.

In another minute he was grasped by some strong arms, which checked his rapid progress and enabled him to gain his feet

without the slightest noise. As he did so a woman threw her arms round him, and he exchanged a passionate but silent embrace with Marjory.

Then she took his hand and with noiseless steps they proceeded down the road. He had, before starting, removed his shoes and put them in his pockets. Marjory and her companion had also removed their shoes; and even the keenest ears upon the battlements would have heard no sound as they proceeded along the road.

Fifty yards farther and they were among the houses. Here they stopped a minute and put on their shoes, and then continued their way. Not a word was spoken until they had traversed several streets and stopped at the door of a house in a quiet lane; it yielded to Marjory's touch, she and Archie entered, and their follower closed and fastened it after them.

A WIFE'S STRATAGEM.—IV.

The moment this was done Marjory threw her arms round Archie's neck with a burst of tears of joy and relief. While Archie was soothing her, the third person stirred

up the embers on the hearth and threw on a handful of dry wood.

"And who is your companion?" Archie asked, after the first transports of joy and thankfulness were past.

"What! don't you recognize Cluny?" Marjory asked, laughing through her tears.

"Cluny! of course!" Archie exclaimed, grasping his follower's hand in his. "I only caught a glimpse of your face and knew that it was familiar to me, but in vain tried to recall its owner. Why, Cluny, it is a long time since you went dressed as a girl into Ayr. And so it is my good friend who has shared my wife's dangers."

"He has done more than that, Archie," Marjory said, "for it is to him that I owe my first idea of coming here. The moment after the castle was taken and it was found that you had been carried off in a boat by the English, Cluny started to tell me the news. Your mother and I were beside ourselves with grief, and Cluny, to comfort us, said, 'Do not despair yet, my lady; my lord shall not be killed by the English if I can prevent it.

"'The master and I have been in a good many dangers, and have always come out of

them safe; it shall not be my fault if he does not slip through their hands yet.' 'Why, what can you do, Cluny?' I said. 'I don't know what I can do yet,' he replied; 'that must depend upon circumstances. My lord is sure to be taken to Carlisle, and I shall go south to see if I cannot get him out of prison.

"'I have often gone among the English garrisons disguised as a woman, and no one in Carlisle is likely to ask me my business there.' It was plain to me at once that if Cluny could go to your aid, so could I, and I at once told him that I should accompany him. Cluny raised all sorts of objections, but to these I would not listen. I brought him to my will by saying, that if he thought my being with him would add to his difficulties I would go alone, but that go I certainly would. So without more ado we got these dresses and made south.

"We had a few narrow escapes of falling into the hands of parties of English, but at last we crossed the frontier and reached Carlisle. Three days later we heard of your arrival; and the next morning all men were talking about your defiance of the king, and that you had been sent to Berwick for execution at the end of the week. So we jour-

neyed hither and got here the day after you arrived.

"The first step was to find a Scotchwoman whom we might trust. This, by great luck, we did. Mary Martin, who lives in this house, is a true Scotchwoman, and will help us to the extent of her power; she is poor, for her husband, who is an Englishman, had for some time been ill, and died but yesterday.

"He was, by what she says, a hard man and a cruel, and his death is no grief to her, and Mary will, if she can, return with her daughter to Roxburgh, where her relations live, and where she married her husband, who was a soldier in the English garrison there."

A WIFE'S STRATAGEM.—V.

"But, Marjory," Archie said, "have you thought how we are to escape hence? Though I am free from the castle I am still within the walls of Berwick, and when, to-morrow, they find that I have escaped, they will search every nook and corner of the town. I had best without delay try and make my way over the walls."

"That was the plan Cluny and I first

thought of," Marjory replied; "but owing to the raids of the Douglas on the border, so strict a watch is kept on the walls that it would be difficult indeed to pass. Cluny has tried a dozen times each night, but the watch is so vigilant that he has each time failed to make his way past them, but has been challenged and has had several arrows discharged at him.

"The guard at the gates is extremely strict, and all carts that pass in and out are searched. Could you have tried to pass before your escape was known you might no doubt have done so in disguise, but the alarm will be given before the gates are open in the morning, and your chance of passing through undetected then would be small indeed.

"The death of the man Martin suggested a plan to me. I have proposed it to his wife, and she has fallen in with it. I have promised her a pension for life if we should succeed, but I believe she would have done it even without reward, for she is a true Scotch-woman. When she heard who it was that I was trying to rescue, she said at once she would risk anything to save the life of one of Scotland's best and bravest champions;

while, on the other hand, she cares not enough for her husband to offer any objection to my plans for the disposal of his body."

"But what are your plans, Marjory?"

"All the neighbours know that Martin is dead; they believe that Cluny is Mary's sister and I her niece, and she has told them that she will return with us to Roxburgh. Martin was a native of a village four miles hence, and she was going to bury him with his fathers there. Now I have proposed to her that Martin shall be buried beneath the wood store here, and that you shall take his place in the coffin."

"It is a capital idea, Marjory," Archie said, "and will assuredly succeed if any plan can do so. The only fear is that the search will be so hot in the morning that the soldiers may even insist upon looking into the coffin."

"We have thought of that," Marjory said, "and dare not risk it. We must expect every house to be searched in the morning, and have removed some tiles in the attic. At daybreak you must creep out on the roof, replace the tiles, and remain hidden there until the search is over. Martin will be laid in the coffin. Thus, even should they lift the lid, no harm will come of it.

"Directly they have gone Cluny will bring you down, and you and he will dig the grave in the floor of the woodshed and place Martin there. Then you will take his place in the coffin, which will be placed in a cart already hired, and Cluny, I, Mrs. Martin, and her daughter, will then set out with it."

A WIFE'S STRATAGEM.—VI.

Soon after daybreak the quick strokes of the alarm-bell at the castle told the inhabitants of Berwick that a prisoner had escaped. Archie at once betook himself to his place of concealment on the roof. He replaced the tiles; and Cluny carefully removed all signs of the place of escape from within. A great hubbub had by this time arisen in the street. Trumpets were blowing, and parties of soldiers moving about in all directions. The gates remained unopened, orders being given that none should pass through without a special order from the governor.

The sentries on the wall were doubled, and then a house-to-house search was commenced, every possible place of concealment being rummaged from basement to attic. Presently the searchers entered the lane in

which Mrs. Martin lived. The latch was ere long lifted, and a sergeant and six soldiers burst into the room. The sight which they beheld quieted their first noisy exclamations. Four women in deep mourning were kneeling by a rough coffin placed on trestles. One of them gave a faint scream as they entered, and Mary Martin, rising to her feet, said:

"What means this rough intrusion?"

"It means," the sergeant said, "that a prisoner has escaped from the castle, one Archibald Forbes, a pestilent Scotch traitor. He has been aided by friends from without, and as the sentries were watchful all night, he must be hidden somewhere in the town, and every house is to be searched."

"You can search if you will," the woman said, resuming the position on her knees. "As you see, this is a house of mourning, seeing that my husband is dead, and is to-day to be buried in his native village, four miles away."

"He won't be buried to-day," the sergeant said; "for the gates are not to be opened save by special order from the governor. Now, lads," he went on, turning to the men, "search the place from top to bottom.

examine all the cupboards and sound the floors, turn over all the wood in the shed, and leave not a single place unsearched where a mouse could be hid."

The soldiers scattered through the house, and were soon heard knocking the scanty furniture about and sounding the floors and walls. At last they returned, saying that nothing was to be found.

"And now," the sergeant said, "I must have a look in that coffin. Who knows but what the traitor Scot may be hid in there!"

Mrs. Martin leaped to her feet.

"You shall not touch the coffin!" she said; "I will not have the remains of my husband disturbed." The sergeant pushed her roughly aside, and with the end of his pike prised up the lid of the coffin, while Mrs. Martin and the other three mourners screamed lustily and wrung their hands in the greatest grief.

A WIFE'S STRATAGEM.—VII.

Just as the sergeant opened the coffin and satisfied himself that a dead man really lay within, an officer, attracted by the screams, entered the room.

"What is this, sergeant?" he asked angrily.

"The orders were to search the houses, but none were given you to trouble the inmates."

Mrs. Martin began to complain of the conduct of the soldiers in wrenching open the coffin.

"It was a necessary duty, my good woman," the officer said, "seeing that a living man might have been carried away instead of a dead one; however, I see all is right."

"Oh, kind sir!" Mrs. Martin said, sobbing, "is it true what this man tells me, that there is no passage through the gates to-day? I have hired a cart to take away my husband's body; the grave is dug, and the priest will be waiting. Kind sir, I pray of you to get me a pass to go out with it, together with my daughter, sister, and niece."

"Very well," the officer said kindly, "I will do as you wish. I shall be seeing the governor presently to make my report to him; and as I have myself seen the dead body, can vouch that no ruse is intended. But assuredly no pass will be given for any man to accompany you; and the Scot, who is a head and shoulders taller than any of you, would scarcely slip out in a woman's garment. When will the cart be here?"

"At noon," the woman replied.

"Very well; an hour before that time a soldier will bring you the pass. Now, sergeant, have you searched the rest of the house?"

"Yes, sir, thoroughly; and nothing suspicious has been found."

"Draw off your men, then, and proceed with your search elsewhere."

No sooner had the officer and the men departed than Cluny ran upstairs, and removing two of the tiles, whispered to Archie that all was clear. The hole was soon enlarged. Archie re-entered and the pair descended to the woodshed which adjoined the kitchen. There, with a spade and mattock which Cluny had purchased on the preceding day, they set to work to dig a grave. In two hours it was completed. The body of John Martin was lowered into it, the earth replaced and trodden down hard, and the wood again piled on to it.

At eleven o'clock a soldier entered with the governor's pass, ordering the soldier at the gate to allow a cart with the body of John Martin, accompanied by four women, to pass out from the town.

At the appointed time the cart arrived. Archie now took his place in the coffin.

Then some neighbours came in and assisted in placing the coffin in the cart. The driver took his place beside it, and the four women, with their hoods drawn over their heads, fell in behind it, weeping bitterly.

When they arrived at the gate the officer in charge carefully read the order, and then gave the order for the gate to be opened. "But stop," he said; "this pass says nothing about a driver, and though this man in no way resembles the description of the doughty Scot, yet as he is not named in the pass I cannot let him through." There was a moment's pause of consternation, and then Cluny said:

"Sister Mary, I will lead the horse. When all is in readiness, and the priest waits, we cannot turn back on such a slight cause." As the driver of the cart knew Mary Martin, he offered no objection, and descended from his seat. Cluny took the reins, and, walking by the side of the horse's head, led it through the gates as these were opened, the others following behind. As soon as they were through, the gates closed behind them, and they were safely out of the town of Berwick.

KINDNESS REWARDED.

FROM "CAPTAIN BAYLEY'S HEIR."

[The daughter of Captain Bayley, a wealthy old Indian officer, made a marriage much beneath her, and was disowned by her father. Her husband dies, and when in the extremity of poverty she meets with an accident in the streets of London. She is taken in and kindly cared for by John and Sarah Holl, the former being a dustman. The lady dies, and her infant is brought up by John Holl and his wife as their own. The child is one day run over by a passing cart and grows up a cripple.

An accident leads to the discovery of his parentage. Captain Bayley at once recognizes him as his heir, and by the advice of the doctors he calls in determines to take him to some foreign baths which might bring about a cure.]

Before starting abroad, Captain Bayley carried out his plan for rewarding John and Sarah Holl for the kindness they had shown to Harry. After consultation with his grandson, he had concluded that the best plan of doing so would be to help them in their own mode of life. He accordingly called upon the dust-contractor for whom John Holl worked, a man who owned twenty carts. An agreement was soon come to with him, by which Captain Bayley agreed to purchase his business at his own price, with the whole of

the plant, carts, and horses. A fortnight after this John's master said to him one day—

"John, I have sold my business; you are going to have a new master."

"I am sorry for that," John said, "for we have got on very well together for the last fifteen years. Besides," he added thoughtfully, "it may be bad for me; I am not as young as I used to be, and he may bring new hands with him."

"I will speak to him about you, John," his master said; "he is a good sort of man, and I daresay I can manage it. The thing is going to be done well. Three or four new carts are to be put on instead of some of the old ones, and there are ten first-rate horses coming in place of some of those that are getting past work. The stables are all being done up, and the thing is going to be done first rate. Curiously enough his name is the same as yours, John Holl."

"Is it, now?" John said. "Well, it will be odd to see my own name on the carts, 'John Holl, Dust Contractor.' It doesn't sound bad, either. So you will speak to him?"

"Yes, I will speak to him," his employer answered.

Three days later John received a message from his master to the effect that the new owner would take possession next day, and that he was to call at the office at eleven o'clock. He added that his new employer said that he wished Mrs. Holl to go round with her husband.

John and Sarah were greatly puzzled with the latter part of this message, until they thought that probably their late employer had mentioned that Mrs. Holl went out charring and cleaning, and that he might intend to engage her to keep the office tidy.

KINDNESS REWARDED.—II.

Accordingly, at eleven o'clock on the following day, John and Sarah presented themselves at the office at Chelsea. As they entered the yard they were greatly amused at seeing all the carts ranged along, in the glory of new paint, with "John Holl, Dust Contractor," in large letters on their sides. A boy was in the office, who told them that they were to go to the house. The yard was situated near the river, and the house which adjoined it was a large old-fashioned building, standing in a pretty, walled garden.

They went to the back-door, and knocked. It was opened by a bright-looking servant-girl.

"Is Mr. Holl in?" Sarah asked.

"You are to be shown in," the girl said, and ushered them into a large, old-fashioned parlour, comfortably furnished.

John and Sarah gave a cry of surprise, for, sitting by the fire, in his wheeled box, just as in the olden time, was Harry.

Scarce a day had passed since he had left them without his coming in for half-an-hour's chat with them, but his appearance here struck them with astonishment.

"What are you doing here, Harry?" Mrs. Holl asked. "Do you know our new master?"

"Yes, mother, I know him. Captain Bayley has had some business with him, and asked me to come down here to see him. You are to sit down until he comes."

"But that will never do, Harry. Why, what would he think of us if he comes in and finds us sitting down in his parlour just as if the place belonged to us?"

"It's all right, mother, I will make it right with him; he's a good fellow, is the new master—a first-rate fellow."

"Is he, now?" John asked, interested, as he and Sarah, seeing nothing else to do, sat down. "And his name is John Holl, just the same as mine?"

"Just the same, John, and he's not unlike you either. Now, when I tell you what a kind action he did once, you will see the sort of fellow he is. Once, a good many years ago, when he wasn't as well off as he is now, when he was just a hard-working man, earning his weekly pay, a poor woman with a child fell down dying at his door. Well, you know, other people would have sent for a policeman and had them taken off to the workhouse, but he and his wife took them into their house and tended the lady till she died."

"That was a right-down good thing," John said, quite unmindful of the fact that he too had done such an action.

KINDNESS REWARDED.—III.

Sarah did not speak, but gave a little gasping cry, and threw her apron, which she wore indoors and out, over her head; a sure sign with her that she was going to indulge

in what she called "a good cry." John looked at her in astonishment.

"And more than that, John," Harry went on; "they kept the child, and brought him up as one of their own; and though afterwards they had a large family, they never made him feel that he was a burden to them, though he grew up a cripple, and was able to do nothing to repay them for all their goodness. Well, at last the boy's friends were found. They had lots of money, and the time came at last when they bought a business for John Holl; and when he came, there the cripple boy was, sitting at the fire, to welcome them, and say, 'Welcome, father! and welcome, mother!'" and Harry held out his hands to them both.

Even now John Holl did not understand. He was naturally dull of comprehension, and the loud sobbing of his wife so bewildered and confounded him that it divided his attention with Harry's narrative.

"Yes, Harry," he said, "it's all very nice. But what's come to you, Sarah? What are you making all this fuss about? We shall be having the new master coming in and finding you sobbing and rocking yourself like a mad woman. Cheer up, old woman. What is it?"

"Don't you see, John," Sarah sobbed out, "don't you see Harry has been telling you your own story? Don't you see that it is you he has been talking about, and that you are 'John Holl, Dust Contractor'?"

"Me?" John said, in utter bewilderment.

"Yes, father," Harry said, taking his hand, "you are the John Holl. This house, and the business, and the carts and horses are yours; Captain Bayley has bought them all for you. He would not come here himself, as I wished him, but he asked me to tell you and mother how glad he was to be able to repay, in a small way he said, your great kindness to me; and how he hoped that you would prosper here, and be as happy as you deserve to be.

"You will be better off than your last master, for he had to pay rent for this house and yard, but, as grandfather has bought the freehold of them all for you, you will have no rent to pay. Therefore I hope, even in bad times, you will be able to get along comfortably. There, father, there, mother, dry your eyes, and look sharp, for I can hear voices in the garden. Evan went to your house after you had gone to bring all the children round here in a cab

"You will find everything in the house, mother, and you must get a grand tea as soon as possible. I have got a servant for you—for, you know, you must have a servant now."

The next minute the children came bounding in, wild with delight, and a happier party never assembled than those who sat round the table of "John Holl, Dust Contractor," on the evening of his first taking possession of his new property.

A BATTLE WITH WOLVES.

FROM "THE YOUNG CARTHAGINIAN."

[Malchus, a young officer of the guard of the great Carthaginian general Hannibal, goes out with two companions on a hunting expedition among the mountains of Spain. After a long day's sport they fail to find their camp, and decide to sleep out in the woods.]

After eating their meal and chatting for some time, Halcon and his companion lay down to rest, Malchus volunteering to keep the first watch. For some time he sat quietly, occasionally throwing logs on the fire from the store which they had collected in readiness. Presently his attitude changed, he listened intently and rose to his feet. Several times he had heard the howls of wolves wandering in the woods, but he now made out a long, deep, continuous howling; he listened for a minute or two and then aroused his companions.

"There is a large pack of wolves approaching," he said, "and by the direction of the sound I judge they are hunting on the traces of our footsteps. That is the line by which we came down from yonder brow, and it

seems to me that they are ascending the opposite slope."

"Yes, and by the sound there must be a very large pack of them," Halcon agreed. "Pile up the fire and set yourselves to gather more wood as quickly as possible; these beasts in large packs are formidable foes."

The three men set to work, vigorously cutting down brushwood and lopping off small boughs of trees with their swords.

"Divide the fire in four," Halcon said, "and pile the fuel in the centre; they will hardly dare to pass between the fires."

The pack was now descending the slope, keeping up a chorus of howls and short yelps which sent a shiver of uneasiness through Malchus. As the wolves approached the spot the howling suddenly ceased.

"They see us," Halcon said; "keep a sharp look-out for them, but do not throw away a shot; we shall need all our arrows before daylight."

Standing perfectly quiet, the friends could hear the pattering sound made by the wolves' feet upon the fallen leaves; but the moon had sunk now, and they were unable to make out their figures.

"It seems to me," Malchus said in a

whisper, "that I can see specks of fire gleaming on the bushes."

"It is the reflection of the fire in their eyes," Halcon replied. "See! they are all round us! There must be scores of them."

For some time the wolves approached no closer; then, encouraged by the silence of the little group standing in the centre of the fires, two or three gray forms showed themselves in the circle of light. Three bows twanged. Two of the wolves fell, and the third, with a howl of pain, fled in the darkness. There was a sound of snarling and growling; a cry of pain, a fierce struggle, and then a long-continued snarling.

"What are they doing?" Malchus asked with a shudder.

"I believe they are eating their wounded comrade," Halcon replied. "I have heard such is the custom of the savage brutes. See, the carcasses of the other two have disappeared already."

A BATTLE WITH WOLVES.—II.

Short as had been the time which had elapsed since they had fallen, other wolves had stolen out, and had dragged away the

bodies of the two which had been killed. This incident, which showed how extreme was the hunger of the wolves, and how noiseless were their motions, redoubled the vigilance of the party.

Malchus threw a handful of brushwood on to each of the fires.

"We must be careful of the fuel," Halcon said. "I would we had thought of this before we lay down to sleep. If we had collected wood enough for our fires we should have been safe; but I doubt much if our supply will last till morning."

As the hours went on, the attitude of the wolves became more and more threatening, and in strong bodies they advanced close up to the fires. Every time that they did so armfuls of fuel were thrown on the fires. As the flames leapt up brightly they each time fell back, losing several of their numbers from the arrows of the little party. But the pile of fuel was now sinking fast, and except when the wolves advanced it was necessary to let the fires burn down.

"It must want four hours yet of daylight," Halcon said, as he threw on the last piece of wood. "Look round as the fire blazes up and see if you can make out any tree which

may be climbed. I would that we had taken to them at first instead of trusting to our fires."

Unfortunately they had chosen a somewhat open space of ground for their encampment, for the brushwood grew thick among the trees.

"There is a tree over there," Malchus said, pointing to it, "with a bough but six feet from the ground. One spring on to that and we are safe."

"Very well," Halcon assented; "we will attempt it at once before the fire burns low. Put your swords into your sheaths, sling your bows and arrows behind you, and take each a burning brand. These will be better weapons in such a case than swords or spears. Now, are you ready? Now!"

Waving the burning brands over their heads, the three Carthaginians dashed towards the tree.

It seemed as if the wolves were conscious that their prey were attempting to escape them; for, with a fierce howl, they sprang from the bushes and rushed to meet them; and, heedless of the blazing brands, sprang upon them.

Malchus scarce knew what passed in the

short fierce struggle. One wolf sprang upon his shield and nearly brought him to the ground; but the sharp boss pierced its body, and he flung it from him, at the same moment that he dashed the brand full in the face of another. A third sprang upon his shoulder, and he felt its hot breath in his face.

Dropping his brand, he drove his dagger deep into its side. Then he hurled his heavy shield among the mass of wolves before him, took a bound into their midst, and grasping the bough, swung himself into the tree and sat there with his legs drawn up as a score of wolves leapt up towards him with open mouths.

He gave a cry of horror. His two friends were down, and a confused mass of struggling bodies alone showed where they had fallen. For an instant he hesitated, debating whether he should leap down and strive to rescue them; but a glance below showed him that he would be pulled down long before he could reach the spot where they had fallen.

Shifting himself along the arm until he reached the trunk, he rose to his feet and sent his arrows vengefully into the midst of

the struggling mass of wolves until he had but three or four shafts left. These he reserved as a last resource.

A BATTLE WITH WOLVES.—III.

There was nothing to do now, and he sat down on the branch, and burst into tears over the fate of his comrades. When he looked up again all was quiet. The fierce pack had devoured not only his comrades, but their own fallen companions, and now sat in a circle with their red tongues hanging out and their eyes fixed upon him. As the fire gradually died out their forms disappeared; but he could hear their quick breathing, and knew that they were still on the watch.

Malchus climbed the tree until he reached a fork, where he could sit at ease, and there waited for morning, when he hoped that his foes would disappear. But as the gray light dawned, he saw them still on the watch; nor, as the dawn brightened into day, did they show any signs of moving.

When he saw they had no intention of leaving the place, Malchus began to consider seriously what he had best do. He might

still be, for aught he knew, miles away from the camp, and his friends there would have no means of knowing the position in which he was placed. They would no doubt send out all the soldiers in search of the party; but in that broken wilderness of forest and mountain, it was the merest chance whether they would find the spot where he was prisoner.

Still, it appeared to him that this was the only possibility of his rescue. The trees grew thickly together, and he could easily have climbed from that in which he was stationed to the next, and might so have made his way for some distance; but as the wolves were watching him, and could see as well by night as by day, there was no advantage in shifting his position.

The day passed slowly. The wolves had for the most part withdrawn from beneath the tree, but a few kept their station there steadily. Malchus knew that the rest were lying beneath the bushes not far off, for he could hear their frequent snarling, and sometimes a gray head was thrust out, and a pair of eager eyes looked hungrily towards him.

From time to time Malchus listened breathlessly in hopes of hearing the distant shouts

of his comrades; but all was still in the forest, and he felt sure that the wolves would hear anyone approaching before he should.

Once or twice, indeed, he fancied by their pricked ears and attitude of attention that they could hear sounds inaudible to him; but the alarm, if such it was, soon passed away, and it might have been that they were listening only to the distant footsteps of some stag passing through the forest.

A BATTLE WITH WOLVES.—IV.

Night came again with its long dreary hours. Malchus strapped himself by his belt to the tree to prevent himself from falling. In this way he managed to obtain a few hours of uneasy sleep, waking up each time with a start, in a cold perspiration of fear, believing that he was falling into the hungry jaws below. In the morning a fierce desire to kill some of his foes seized him, and he descended to the lowest branch.

The wolves, seeing their prey so close at hand, thronged thickly under it, and strove to leap up at him. Lying down on the bough, and twisting his legs firmly under it to give him a purchase, Malchus thrust his

sword nearly to the hilt between the jaws, which snapped fiercely as a wolf sprang to within a few inches of the bough. Several were killed in this way, and the rest, rendered cautious, withdrew to a short distance.

Suddenly an idea struck Malchus. He took off his belt and formed it into a running noose, and then waited until the wolves should summon up courage to attack again. It was not long. Furious with hunger, which the prey they had already devoured was only sufficient to whet, the wolves again approached and began to spring towards the bough.

Malchus dropped the noose over the neck of one, and with an effort hauled it to the bough, and despatched it with his dagger. Then he moved along the bough and hung it on a branch some ten feet from the ground, slashing open with his dagger its chest and stomach. Having done this he returned to his place.

Six wolves were one after the other so hauled up and despatched, and, as Malchus expected, the smell of their blood rendered the pack more savage than ever. They assembled round the foot of the tree, and continued to spring at the trunk, making vain

endeavours to get at the supply of food which hung tantalizingly at so short a distance beyond their reach.

So the day passed as before without signs of rescue. When it became dark Malchus again descended to the lowest bough, and fired his three remaining arrows among the wolves below him. Loud howls followed each discharge, and the sound of a desperate struggle below.

Then he tumbled the six dead wolves from their position to the ground below, and then as noiselessly as possible made his way along a bough into an adjoining tree. From this he passed into another, till he had attained some distance from the spot where the wolves were fighting and growling over the remains of their companions, far too absorbed in their work for any thought of him.

Then he dropped noiselessly to the ground and fled at the top of his speed. It would be, he was sure, some time before the wolves had completed their feast; and even should they discover that he was missing from the tree, it would probably be some time before they could hit upon his scent, especially as, having just feasted on blood, their sense of smell would be dulled.

Several times he stopped and listened in dread lest he should hear the distant howl, which would tell him that the pack was again on his scent. All was quiet, save for the usual cries and noises in the forest. In two hours he saw a distant glow of light, and was soon in the encampment of his friends.

A CYCLONE IN THE BAY OF BENGAL.

FROM "A CHAPTER OF ADVENTURES."

[Jack Robson, Arthur Hill, Jim Tucker, are three midshipmen on board the *Wild Wave*. When in the Bay of Bengal the appearance of the weather changes, and the captain orders most of the sails to be taken in.]

"What is it all about?" Arthur Hill asked his comrades, as the three boys gathered together after the work was done. "Why, there is not a breath of wind. Is it all done for practice, do you think?"

Jim shook his head. "I expect we are going to have one of those cyclones Mr. Timmins was speaking about the other day, though I don't see any signs of it, except the queer colour of the sky. I expect the glass must have been going down very fast. There is the captain popping into his cabin again. Well, he is not long about it," he added, as Captain Murchison hurried out again and spoke to Mr. Timmins, who immediately gave the order, "Furl mizzen and main topsails! Lower down the fore-stay-sail!"

"Well, there can't be more to do now,"

Jack said, when the order was carried out, "unless we get to work to set them all again."

"Look, Jack!" Arthur Hill said, grasping his arm and pointing away on the starboard beam.

A wall of black mist seemed to hang upon the horizon, rising every moment higher and higher.

"The squall is coming, lads!" the captain shouted. "When it strikes her, hold on for your lives. Carpenter, put a man with an axe at each of the weather-shrouds. We may have to cut away before we have done with it."

All eyes were now turned towards the bank of cloud, which was rising with extraordinary rapidity. Small portions of the upper line seemed at times to be torn off and to rush ahead of the main body, and then to disappear, suddenly blown into fragments. A low moaning sound was heard, and a line of white could be made out at the foot of the cloud-bank. The water around the ship was still as smooth as glass, though there was a slight swell, which swayed her to and fro, and caused the shrouds and blocks to rattle.

Louder and louder grew the murmur. Again the captain's voice was heard: "Hold on for your lives, lads!" and then with a scream and roar, as of a thousand railway whistles, the gale struck the ship. So tremendous was the force, that although the closely-reefed fore-topsail was the only sail that the *Wild Wave* was showing aloft—for the jib blew from the bolt-ropes the instant the squall struck her—the vessel heeled over and over until her lee-rail was under water. Further and further she went, until the ends of the yards were under water, and the sea seemed to Jack, who was holding on by the weather bulwark, as if it were directly under his feet.

He thought that the ship was going to capsize, and had not her cargo been well stowed she must have done so. She was now almost on her beam ends, pressed down by the action of the wind upon her hull rather than her masts, and had it not been that the boys had each at the last moment twisted a rope round his body, they must have dropped into the water, for the deck afforded no hold whatever to their feet. Jack felt completely bewildered at the noise and fury of the wind. He had thought that

after the gale they had passed through south of the Cape, he knew what bad weather was; but this was beyond anything of which he had the slightest conception.

A CYCLONE.—II.

Looking round he saw Mr. Timmins clinging to the bulwarks, and making his way along with the greatest difficulty until he reached the sailor stationed with the axe at the mizzen-shrouds. He saw the man rise from his crouching position, and, holding on to the bulwarks, strike three blows on the lanyards. Then there was a crash, and the mizzen-mast broke suddenly off four feet above the deck, and fell into the sea.

Jack thought that the vessel lifted a little, for he could see one more streak of the deck planking. Mr. Timmins looked round towards the captain, who was clinging to the wheel. The latter waved his hand, and the mate again began to make his way forward.

He passed the boys without a word, for the loudest shout would have been inaudible in the howling of the wind. He stopped at the main-shrouds again, the axe descended, and the mainmast went over the side. The

relief from the weight of the mast and the pressure of the wind upon it was immediate; the *Wild Wave* rose with a surge and her lee-rail appeared above the surface, then she rose no further.

Mr. Timmins looked back again at the captain, but the latter made no sign. He could see that the pressure of the wind upon the foremast was beginning to pay the vessel's head off before it; as it did so she slowly righted until, when fairly before the wind, she was upon a level keel. Then there was a dull explosion heard even above the gale, and the fore-topsail split into ribbons.

But the ship was now before the gale, and was scudding, from the effect of the wind on the bare pole and hull alone, at great speed through the water. As soon as she had righted the lads threw off their lashings, but still clung tight to the rail, and struggled aft till they stood under shelter of the poop.

"This is something like!" Jim roared at the top of his voice into Jack's ear. Even then his words could scarcely be heard.

Jack nodded. At present, even had conversation been possible, he would have had no inclination for it, for he felt stunned and bewildered. It had all taken place in ten

minutes. It was but that time since the ship had been lying motionless on a still ocean. Now she was rushing with one mast only standing, before a furious gale, and had had the narrowest possible escape from destruction. As yet the sea had scarce begun to rise, but seemed flattened under the terrific pressure of the wind, which scooped hollows in it and drove the water before it in fine spray.

Jack had read in the papers about tornadoes in America, and how houses were sometimes bodily lifted with their contents and carried long distances, and how everything above the surface was swept away as if a scythe had passed over it. He had heard these accounts discussed by the fishermen, and the general opinion in Leigh (Jack's home) was that there was mighty little truth in them. The Leigh men thought they knew what a gale was, and what it could do. They knew that chimney-pots and tiles could be carried some distance with the wind, that arms of trees could be twisted off, and that an empty boat could be carried a considerable distance. But that a house could be bodily whirled away was going so far beyond anything that came within their experience as to be wholly disbelieved.

But Jack knew now as he looked round that this and more was possible. He felt the whole vessel leap and quiver as each gust struck her, and this with only one bare pole standing, and he would have been scarcely surprised now had the ship herself been lifted bodily from the water.

A CYCLONE.—III.

As to walking along the deck, it would have been impossible. No man could have forced his way against the wind, and Jack felt that, were he to attempt to move from the sheltered spot where he was standing, he would be taken up and carried away as if he were but a figure of straw. Presently Mr. Hoare came down from the poop and dived into the cabin, making a sign to the lads to follow him. He stood there for a minute panting with his exertions.

"The captain has sent me down for a spell," he said. "He and the first and Jack Moore are all lashed to the wheel. Sometimes I thought that all four of us, wheel and all, would have been blown right away.

"Well, lads, this is a cyclone, and you may live a hundred years and never see such

another. You had better stop in here, for you might get blown right away, and can be of no good on deck. There is nothing to do. The wind has got her and will take her where it likes; we can do nothing but keep her straight. There will be a tremendous sea before long. The water at the upper part of the bay is shallow, and we shall have a sea like yours at the mouth of the Thames, Jack,—only on a big scale.

"Our lives are in God's hands, boys; don't forget to ask for help where alone it can be obtained. Now I must go up again. Do you know, lads, my sides fairly ache. Once or twice I was pressed against the wheel with such force that I could scarcely breathe, and if I had been pinned there by an elephant butting me I could not have been more powerless.

"That is right, steward, get me my oil-skin and sou'-wester from the cabin. You had better get a kettle on over the spirit-stove, so that we can have a cup of hot cocoa when we like. Now, then, I am ready for the fray again!" and buttoning himself closely up Mr. Hoare went on deck again.

Jack Moore was the next to come down. "Well, young gentlemen," said he, "this is

a gale and no mistake. I have been at sea over thirty years, and never saw anything to be compared with it. If you get through this you need never be afraid of another, even if you live to be white-headed!"

After Jack Moore had gone up Mr. Timmins and the captain came down by turns. Each took a cup of cocoa. They said but few words to the boys, and were indeed almost too much exhausted by the struggle through which they had gone to be able to speak. The boys gathered again under the lee of the poop and watched the scene. It had changed considerably; the wind seemed as violent as ever, but the sea was no longer kept in subjection to it, and was now tossing itself in a wild and confused manner.

Another half-hour and it had settled into some sort of regularity, and was sweeping before the wind in deep trough-like waves with steep sides, resembling those to which Jack had been accustomed at home, on a gigantic scale. Soon again these were broken up, and were succeeded by a wild tumultuous sea like a boiling cauldron.

The vessel was thrown violently from side to side, taking water over, now on one beam now on the other, and at times shaking from

blows as if she had struck upon a rock. So sharp and sudden were her movements that the lads could not keep their feet, and again made their way into the cabin. Even here it was necessary to shout in order to be heard.

A CYCLONE.—IV.

"What an extraordinary sea, Jim! I never saw anything like it before."

"That is what does it," Jim replied, pointing to the tell-tale compass hanging from the beams overhead.

Jack glanced at it. "Why, we are running due south!"

"Aye; and I expect we have been two or three times round the compass already. That is what makes this frightful broken sea."

"Well, as long as we keep on running round and round," Jack said, "there is no fear of our running against the land anywhere."

Jim was further advanced in the study of navigation. "You forget," he said, "the centre of the cyclone is moving along all the time, and though we may go round and round the centre, we are still moving in the same direction as the cyclone is going, whatever that may be."

For hours the storm raged without the slightest signs of abatement. The sea was now terrific; the waist of the ship was full of water. Green seas swept over the vessel's bows, carrying everything before them; and pouring aft burst open the cabin door and deluged the cabin. By turns the boys made their way to the door and looked out.

"Come out, you fellows!" Jim Tucker shouted after one of these trips of investigation. "The men are coming out from the fo'castle. There is something to be done."

The boys came out and crawled a few steps up the poop-ladder, holding on for life as they did so. They did not attempt to get on to the poop, for they felt they would be blown away if they exposed themselves there to the full force of the wind.

Looking round, the scene was terrible. The surface of the sea was almost hidden by the clouds of spray blown from the heads of the waves; a sky that was inky black hung overhead. The sea, save for the white heads, was of similar hue, but ahead there seemed a gleam of light. Jim Tucker, holding on by the rail, raised himself two or three feet higher to have a better view. A moment was sufficient.

He sprang down again and shouted in his comrades' ears, "Breakers ahead!" It needed no further words. The light ahead was the gleam of a sea of white foam towards which the vessel was hurrying. Nothing could be done to check or change her course. Had the mizzen been standing an effort might have been made to show a little sail upon it, and bring her head up into the wind to anchor; but even could this have been done the cables would have snapped like packthreads. There was nothing for it but destruction. Jack followed Jim's example—crawled to the top of the gangway, and holding on by the poop-rail raised himself to his feet and looked forward.

Right across their bows stretched a band of white breakers, and beyond through the mist he could make out the line of a low shore. The lads descended again into the waist, and with great difficulty made their way forward to where the men were huddled together round the entrance to the fo'castle. They too had kept a look-out, and knew of the danger into which they were running and the impossibility of avoiding it.

"Is there anything to be done?" Jim Tucker shouted.

A silent shake of the head was a sufficient answer. The vessel and all in her were doomed. The officers were now seen leaving the helm and coming forward. It was a proof in itself of the hopelessness of the prospect. The vessel was indeed steering herself straight before the gale, and as there were no regular following waves there was no fear of her broaching to. The boats, that had at the commencement of the storm been hanging from the davits, were all gone or useless. One or two had been smashed to pieces by heavy seas striking them; others had been torn from their fastenings and blown clean away.

The long-boat alone remained lashed amidships on the deck. Jack pointed to her, but an old sailor shook his head and pointed to the sea. No boat could hope to live in it a minute. Once in the breakers it would be swamped instantly. The officers made their way forward.

"It is all over, lads!" the captain shouted; "but some of us may reach the shore on pieces of the wreck as she breaks up. We will get the long-boat ready for launching: some of you may cling to her. Now, lads, let us shake hands all round, and meet our

fate as British sailors should do—calmly and bravely. Perhaps—who knows?—some of us may be saved yet."

A CYCLONE.—V.

The crew of the *Wild Wave* had been a happy one. Discipline had been good, although every indulgence had been allowed the men, and all were fond of their officers. There was a silent hand-clasp all round, and then some of the sailors followed the officers to the boat.

As they did so they knew well that the order was given merely to keep them employed, for that the chance of anyone being washed ashore and reaching it alive through the tremendous surf was small indeed. As they cut away the boat's cover they looked round, and a low cry broke from several of them. The ship was close to the broken water.

Every man clung to something and awaited the shock. In a few seconds it came. As she descended a wave there was a tremendous shock, followed instantaneously by a crash as the foremast went over the bow. Another and another, accompanied each time with the sound of rending timbers.

"Cut away the lashings of the boat!" the captain shouted, drawing his knife and setting the example. As he did so he touched Jack and pointed into the bottom of the boat. The lad understood him. He was to put in the plugs, which at ordinary times were left out to allow any rain-water to escape as it fell. Jack in turn touched Arthur, and the two climbed into the boat to replace the plugs.

As they did so a fiercer gust than usual struck the vessel. The lashings of the long-boat had just been cut, and the gale seized it and raised it in the air as if it had been made of paper. Jack and Arthur uttered a cry, and involuntarily clung for life to the thwarts. Over and over they were whirled. Confused, giddy, scarce knowing what had happened, they clung on. It was a sort of nightmare, and how long it lasted they knew not. Presently there was a terrific crash, and they knew no more.

When Jack opened his eyes he lay for some time wondering where he was and what had become of him. There were stars in the sky overhead, but the light was stealing over it, and he felt that it was daybreak. There was a loud, dull, roaring sound in his

ears—a sound he could not understand, for not even a breath of wind fanned his cheek.

At last slowly the facts came to his mind. There had been a great storm, the vessel was among the breakers, he had got into the long-boat with Arthur to put in the plugs, they had been lifted up and blown away—and then suddenly Jack sat upright.

It was light enough for him to see that he was still in the boat, but its back was broken and its sides staved in. Around him was a mass of tangled foliage, and close beside him lay Arthur Hill, the blood slowly oozing from a terrible gash in his forehead. Jack leaned over and raised him, and loudly shouted his name in his ear. With a sigh Arthur opened his eyes.

"What is it, Jack?" he asked feebly.

"We are saved, old man. We have been blown right ashore in the boat, and we have both got shaken and hurt a bit; but, thank God, we are both alive."

"Where are we?" Arthur asked, looking round.

"As far as I can see," Jack replied, "we are in the middle of a grove of trees that have been blown down by the gale, and the leaves and branches have broken our fall;

otherwise we must have been smashed up. We must have been lying here for the last ten hours. It was just about six o'clock when we struck, for I looked at the clock in the cabin the last time we were down there; and as the sun will be up before long, it must be getting on for five now. Now, let us try to get out of this."

With the greatest difficulty, for they were still weak and terribly shaken, the boys made their way through the tangle of trees and branches, into which they had so providentially fallen. Both uttered an exclamation of surprise as they reached the edge of the wood: the sea was nearly half a mile away! A tremendous surf was still breaking, and for a quarter of a mile out a band of white breakers extended along the shore. There were no signs of the *Wild Wave.*

THE FLOOD IN PINE-TREE GULCH.

FROM "TALES OF DARING AND DANGER."

[A lad known as White-faced Dick in a mining camp in California had received much rough kindness from a miner called Red George. Heavy rain had fallen among the hills, and the channel, through which the stream running through the valley had been diverted, was insufficient to carry away the water that came down. Dick, who was a weakly lad altogether unfitted for the rough work of mining, had made up his mind to go east to his native village.]

As he was sitting thinking it over his thoughts came back to Pine-tree Gulch, and he started to his feet. Could he be mistaken? Were his eyes deceiving him? No; among the stones and boulders of the old bed of the Yuba there was the gleam of water, and even as he watched it he could see it widening out. He started to run down the hill to give the alarm, but before he was half-way he paused, for there were loud shouts, and a scene of bustle and confusion instantly arose.

The cradles were deserted, and the men working on the surface loaded themselves with their tools and made for the high ground, while those at the windlasses worked their hardest to draw up their comrades

below. A man coming down from above stopped close to Dick, with a low cry, and stood gazing with a white scared face. Dick had worked with him; he was one of the company to which Red George belonged.

"What is it, Saunders?"

"They are lost," the man replied. "I was at the windlass when they shouted up to me to go up and fetch them something from the huts. They had just struck the gold rich."

Dick understood at once. Red George and his mates were still in the bottom of the shaft, ignorant of the danger which was threatening them.

"Come on," he cried; "we shall be in time yet," and at the top of his speed dashed down the hill, followed by Saunders.

"What is it, what is it?" asked parties of men mounting the hill.

"Red George's gang are still below!"

Dick's eyes were fixed on the water. There was a broad band now of yellow with a white edge down the centre of the stony flat, and it was widening with terrible rapidity. It was scarce ten yards from the windlass at the top of Red George's shaft when Dick, followed closely by Saunders, reached it.

"Come up, mates; quick, for your lives! The river is rising; you will be flooded out directly. Every one else has gone!"

As he spoke he pulled at the rope by which the bucket was hanging, and the handles of the windlass flew round rapidly as it descended. When it had run out Dick and he grasped the handles.

"All right below?"

An answering call came up, and the two began their work, throwing their whole strength into it. Quickly as the windlass revolved, it seemed an endless time to Dick before the bucket came up, and the first man stepped out. It was not Red George. Dick had hardly expected it would be. Red George would be sure to see his two mates up before him, and the man uttered a cry of alarm as he saw the water, now within a few feet of the mouth of the shaft.

THE FLOOD IN PINE-TREE GULCH.—II.

It was a torrent now, for not only was it coming through the dam, but it was rushing down in cascades from the new channel. Without a word the miner placed himself facing Dick, and the moment the bucket was

again down the three grasped the handles. But quickly as they worked, the edge of the water was within a few inches of the shaft when the next man reached the surface; but again the bucket descended before the rope tightened. However, the water had began to run over the lip—at first in a mere trickle, and then, almost instantaneously, in a cascade, which grew larger and larger.

The bucket was half-way up when a sound like thunder was heard, the ground seemed to tremble under their feet, and then at the turn of the valley above, a great wave of yellow water, crested with foam, was seen tearing along at the speed of a race-horse.

"The dam has burst!" Saunders shouted. "Run for your lives, or we are all lost!"

The three men dropped the handles and ran at full speed towards the shore, while loud shouts to Dick to follow came from the crowd of men standing on the slope. But the boy still grasped the handles, and with lips tightly closed still toiled on. Slowly the bucket ascended, for Red George was a heavy man; then suddenly the weight slackened, and the handle went round faster.

The shaft was filling, the water had reached the bucket, and had risen to Red George's

neck, so that his weight was no longer on the rope. So fast did the water pour in that it was not half a minute before the bucket reached the surface, and Red George sprang out. There was but time for one exclamation, and then the great wave struck them. Red George was whirled like a straw in the current; but he was a strong swimmer, and at a point where the valley widened out, half a mile lower, he struggled to shore.

Two days later the news reached Pine-tree Gulch that a boy's body had been washed ashore twenty miles down, and ten men, headed by Red George, went and brought it solemnly back to Pine-tree Gulch. There, among the stumps of pine-trees, a grave was dug, and there, in the presence of the whole camp, White-faced Dick was laid to rest.

Pine-tree Gulch is a solitude now, the trees are growing again, and none would dream that it was once a busy scene of industry; but if the traveller searches among the pine-trees he will find a stone with the words:

"Here lies White-faced Dick, who died to save Red George. 'What can a man do more than give his life for a friend?'"

Red George worked no more at the diggings. After seeing the stone laid in its place,

he went east, bought a small farm, and settled down there; but to the end of his life he was never weary of telling those who would listen to it the story of Pine-tree Gulch.

A BRUSH WITH THE CHINESE,

AND WHAT CAME OF IT.

FROM "TALES OF DARING AND DANGER."

It was early in December that H.M.S. *Perseus* was cruising off the mouth of the Canton River. War had been declared with China in consequence of her continued evasions of the treaty she had made with us, and it was expected that a strong naval force would soon gather to bring her to reason.

In the meantime the ships on the station had a busy time of it; chasing the enemy's junks when they ventured to show themselves beyond the reach of the guns of their forts; and occasionally having a brush with the piratical boats which took advantage of the general confusion to plunder friend as well as foe.

The *Perseus* had that afternoon chased two government junks up a creek. The sun had already set when they took refuge there; and the captain did not care to send his boats after them in the dark, as many of the

creeks ran up for miles into the flat country. As the creeks not unfrequently had many arms or branches, the boats might, in the dark, miss the junks altogether.

Orders were issued that four boats should be ready for starting at daybreak the next morning. The *Perseus* anchored off the mouth of the creek; and two boats were ordered to row backwards and forwards off its mouth all night to ensure that the enemy did not slip out in the darkness.

Jack Fothergill, the senior midshipman, was commanding the gig, and two of the other midshipmen were going in the pinnace and launch, commanded respectively by the first lieutenant and the master. The three other midshipmen of the *Perseus* were loud in their lamentations that they were not to share in the fun.

"You can't all go, you know," Fothergill said, "and it's no use making a noise about it; the captain has been very good to let three of us go."

"It's all very well for you, Jack," Percy Adcock, the youngest of the lads, replied, "because you are one of those chosen; and it is not so hard for Simmons and Linthorpe, because they went the other day in the boat

that chased those junks under shelter of the guns of their battery. But I haven't had a chance for ever so long."

"What fun was there in chasing the junks?" Simmons said. "We never got near the Chinese till they were close to their battery. Then just as the first shot came singing from their guns, and we thought that we were going to have some excitement, the first lieutenant sung out 'Easy all,' and there was nothing for it but to turn round and to row for the ship.

"And a nice hot row it was—two hours and a half in a broiling sun. Of course I am not blaming Oliphant, for the captain's orders were strict that we were not to try to cut the junks out if they got under the guns of any of their batteries. Still it was horribly annoying, and I do think the captain might have remembered what bad luck we had last time, and given us a chance to-morrow."

"It is clear we could not all go," Fothergill said, "and naturally enough the captain chose the three seniors. Besides, if you did have bad luck last time, you had your chance, and I don't suppose we shall have anything more exciting now. These fellows always set fire to their junks and row for the

shore directly they see us, after firing a shot or two wildly in our direction."

"Well, Jack, if you don't expect any fun," Simmons replied, "perhaps you wouldn't mind telling the first lieutenant you do not care to go, and that I am very anxious to take your place. Perhaps he will be good enough to allow me to relieve you."

"A likely thing that!" Fothergill laughed. "No, Tom, I am sorry you are not going, but you must make the best of it till another chance comes."

"Don't you think, Jack," Percy Adcock said to his senior in a coaxing tone later on, "you could manage to smuggle me into the boat with you?"

"Not I, Percy. Suppose you got hurt, what would the captain say then? And firing as wildly as the Chinese do, a shot is just as likely to hit your little carcass as to lodge in one of the sailors. No, you must just make the best of it, Percy, and I promise you that next time there is a boat expedition, if you are not put in, I will say a good word to the first lieutenant for you."

"That promise is better than nothing," the boy said; "but I would a deal rather go this time and take my chance next."

"But you see you can't, Percy, and there's no use talking any more about it. I really do not expect there will be any fighting. Two junks would hardly make any opposition to the boats of the ship, and I expect we shall be back by nine o'clock with the news that they were well on fire before we came up."

A BRUSH WITH THE CHINESE.—II.

Percy Adcock, however, was determined to go if possible. He was a favourite among the men, and when he spoke to the bow-oar of the gig, the latter promised to do anything he could to aid him to carry out his wishes.

"We are to start at daybreak, Tom, so that it will be quite dark when the boats are lowered. I will creep into the gig before that and hide myself as well as I can under your thwart, and all you have got to do is to take no notice of me. When the boat is lowered I think they will hardly make me out from the deck, especially as you will be standing up in the bow holding on with the boat-hook till the rest get on board."

"Well, sir, I will do my best; but if you

are caught you must not let it be known that I knew anything about it."

"I won't do that," Percy said. "I don't think there is much chance of my being noticed until we get on board the junks, and then they won't know which boat I came off in, and the first lieutenant will be too busy to say anything. Of course I shall hear about it when I am on board again; but I don't mind that so that I see the fun. Besides, I want to send home some things to my sister, and she will like them all the better if I can tell her I captured them on board some junks we seized and burnt."

The next morning the crews mustered before daybreak. Percy had already taken his place under the bow thwart of the gig. The davits were swung out, and two men took their places in her as she was lowered down by the falls.

As soon as she touched the water the rest of the crew clambered down by the ladder and took their places; then Fothergill took his seat in the stern, and the boat pushed off and lay a few lengths away from the ship until the heavier boats put off. As soon as they were under weigh Percy crawled out from his hiding-place and placed himself in

the bow, where he was sheltered by the bodies of the oarsmen from Fothergill's sight.

Day was just breaking now, but it was still dark on the water, and the boat rowed very slowly until it became lighter. Percy could just make out the shores of the creek on both sides; they were but two or three feet above the level of the water, and were evidently submerged at high tide.

The creek was about a hundred yards wide, and the lad could not see far ahead, for it was full of sharp windings and turnings. Here and there branches joined it, but the boats were evidently following the main channel. After another half-hour's rowing the first lieutenant suddenly gave the order "Easy all," and the men, looking over their shoulders, saw a village a quarter of a mile ahead, with the two junks they had chased the night before lying in front of it. Almost at the same moment a sudden uproar was heard — drums were beaten and gongs sounded.

"They are on the look-out for us," the first lieutenant said. "Mr. Mason, do you keep with me and attack the junk highest up the river; Mr. Bellew and Mr. Fothergill, do you take the one lower down. Row on, men."

The oars all touched the water together, and the four boats leapt forward. In a minute a scattering fire of gingals and matchlocks was opened from the junks, and the bullets pattered on the water round the boats. Percy was now kneeling up in the bow. As they passed a branch channel three or four hundred yards from the village, he started and leapt to his feet.

"There are four or five junks in that passage, Fothergill; they are poling out."

The first lieutenant heard the words.

"Row on, men; let us finish with these craft ahead before the others get out. This must be that piratical village we have heard about, Mr. Mason, as lying up one of these creeks; that accounts for those two junks not going higher up. I was surprised at seeing them here, for they might guess that we should try to get them this morning. Evidently they expected to catch us in a trap."

A BRUSH WITH THE CHINESE.—III.

Percy was delighted at finding that, in the excitement caused by his news, the first lieutenant had forgotten to take any notice of his being there without orders; and he

returned a defiant nod to the threat conveyed by Fothergill shaking his fist at him. As they neared the junks the fire of those on board redoubled, and was aided by that of many villagers gathered on the bank of the creek.

Suddenly from a bank of rushes four cannons were fired. A ball struck the pinnace, smashing in her side. The other boats gathered hastily round and took her crew on board, and then dashed at the junks, which were but a hundred yards distant. The valour of the Chinese evaporated as they saw the boats approaching, and scores of them leapt overboard and swam for shore.

In another minute the boats were alongside and the crews scrambling up the sides of the junks. Only a few Chinamen attempted to oppose them. These were speedily overcome, and the British had now time to look round, and saw that six junks crowded with men had issued from the side creek and were making towards them.

"Let the boats tow astern," the lieutenant ordered. "We should have to run the gauntlet of that battery on shore if we were to attack them, and might lose another boat

before we reached their side. We will fight them here."

The junks approached, those on board firing their guns, yelling and shouting, while the drums and gongs were furiously beaten.

"They will find themselves mistaken, Percy, if they think they are going to frighten us with all that noise," Fothergill said. "You young rascal, how did you get on board the boat without being seen? The captain will be sure to suspect I had a hand in concealing you."

The tars were now at work firing the matchlocks, with which the deck was strewn, at the approaching junks. As they took steady aim, leaning their pieces on the bulwarks, they did considerable execution among the Chinamen crowded on board the junks, while the shot of the Chinese, for the most part, whistled far overhead. But the guns of the shore battery, which had now been slewed round to bear upon them, opened with a better aim, and several shots came crashing into the sides of the captured junk.

"Get ready to board, lads!" Fothergill shouted. "Don't wait for them to board you, but the moment they come alongside

lash their rigging to ours and spring on board them."

The leading junk was now about twenty yards away, and presently grated alongside. Half a dozen sailors at once sprang into her rigging with ropes. After lashing the junks together they leaped down upon her deck, where Fothergill was leading the gig's crew and some of those rescued from the pinnace, while Mr. Bellew, with another party, had boarded her at the stern. Several of the Chinese fought stoutly, but the greater part lost heart at seeing themselves attacked. Many began at once to jump overboard, and after two or three minutes' sharp fighting, the rest either followed their example or were beaten below.

A BRUSH WITH THE CHINESE.—IV.

Fothergill looked round. The other junk had been attacked by two of the enemy, one on each side, and the little body of sailors were gathered in her waist, and were defending themselves against an overwhelming number of the enemy. The other three piratical junks had been carried somewhat up the creek by the tide that was sweeping

inward, and could not for the moment take part in the fight.

"Mr. Oliphant is hard pressed, sir." He asked the master: "Shall we take to the boats?"

"That will be the best plan," Mr. Bellew replied. "Quick, lads, get the boats alongside and tumble in; there is not a moment to be lost."

The crew at once sprang to the boats and rowed to the other junk, which was but some thirty yards away.

The Chinese, absorbed in their contest with the crew of the pinnace, did not perceive the new-comers until they gained the deck, and with a shout fell furiously upon them. In their surprise and consternation the pirates did not pause to note that they were still five to one superior in number, but made a rush for their own vessels.

The English at once took the offensive. The first lieutenant with his party boarded one, while the new-comers leapt on to the deck of the other. The panic which had seized the Chinese was so complete that they attempted no resistance whatever, but sprang overboard in great numbers and swam to the shore, which was but twenty yards away,

and in three minutes the English were in undisputed possession of both vessels.

"Back again, Mr. Fothergill, or you will lose the craft you captured," Lieutenant Oliphant said; "they have already cut her free."

The Chinese, indeed, who had been beaten below by the boarding party, had soon perceived the sudden departure of their captors. Gaining the deck again they had cut the lashings which fastened them to the other junk, and were proceeding to hoist their sails. They were too late, however.

Almost before the craft had way on her, Fothergill and his crew were alongside. The Chinese did not wait for the attack, but at once sprang overboard and made for the shore. The other three junks, seeing the capture of their comrades, had already hoisted their sails, and were making up the creek. Fothergill dropped an anchor, left four of his men in charge, and rowed back to Mr. Oliphant.

"What shall we do next, sir?"

"We will give those fellows on shore a lesson, and silence their battery. Two men have been killed since you left. We must let the other junks go for the present. Four

of my men were killed and eleven wounded before Mr. Bellew and you came to our assistance.

"The Chinese were fighting pluckily up to that time, and it would have gone very hard with us if you had not been at hand. They will fight when they think they have got it all their own way. But before we land we will set fire to the five junks we have taken. Do you return and see that the two astern are well lighted, Mr. Fothergill; Mr. Mason will see to these three. When you have done your work take to your boat and lay off till I join you. Keep the junks between you and the shore, to protect you from the fire of the rascals there."

"I cannot come with you, I suppose, Fothergill?" Percy Adcock said, as the midshipman was about to descend into his boat again.

"Yes, come along, Percy. It doesn't matter what you do now. The captain will be so pleased when he hears that we have captured and burnt five junks, that you will get off with a very light scolding, I imagine."

"That's just what I was thinking, Jack. Has it not been fun?"

"You wouldn't have thought it fun if you

had got one of those matchlock balls in your body. There are a good many of our poor fellows just at the present moment who do not see anything funny in the affair at all. Here we are; clamber up."

A BRUSH WITH THE CHINESE.—V.

The crew soon set to work under Fothergill's orders. The sails were cut off the masts and thrown down into the hold; bamboos, of which there were an abundance down there, were heaped over them, a barrel of oil was poured over the mass, and the fire then applied.

"That will do, lads. Now take to your boats and let's make a bonfire of the other junk."

In ten minutes both vessels were a sheet of flame, and the boat was lying a short distance from them waiting for further operations. The inhabitants of the village, furious at the failure of the plan which had been laid for the destruction of the English, kept up a constant fusillade. This, however, did no harm, for the gig was completely sheltered by the burning junks close to her from their missiles.

"There go the others!" Percy exclaimed after a minute or two, as three columns of smoke arose simultaneously from the other junks, and the sailors were seen dropping into their boats alongside.

The killed and wounded were placed in the other gig with four sailors in charge. They were directed to keep under shelter of the junks until rejoined by the pinnace and Fothergill's gig, after these had done their work on shore.

When all was ready the first lieutenant raised his hand as a signal, and the two boats dashed between the burning junks and rowed for the shore. Such of the natives as had their weapons charged fired a hasty volley, and then, as the sailors leapt from their boats, took to their heels.

"Mr. Fothergill, take your party into the village and set fire to the houses; shoot down every man you see. This place is a nest of pirates. I will capture that battery and then join you."

Fothergill and his sailors at once entered the village. The men had already fled; the women were turned out of the houses, and these were immediately set on fire. The tars regarded the whole affair as a glorious joke,

and raced from house to house, making a hasty search in each for concealed valuables before setting it on fire. In a short time the whole village was in a blaze.

"There is a house there, standing in that little grove a hundred yards away," Percy said.

"It looks like a temple," Fothergill replied. "However, we will have a look at it." And calling two sailors to accompany him, he started at a run towards it, Percy keeping by his side.

"It is a temple," Fothergill said when they approached it. "Still, we will have a look at it, but we won't burn it; it is as well to respect the religion, even of a set of piratical scoundrels like these."

At the head of his men he rushed in at the entrance. There was a blaze of fire as half a dozen muskets were discharged in their faces. One of the sailors dropped dead, and before the others had time to realize what had happened they were beaten to the ground by a storm of blows from swords and other weapons.

A heavy blow crashed down on Percy's head, and he fell insensible even before he realized what had occurred.

When he recovered, his first sensation was that of a vague wonder as to what had happened to him. He seemed to be in darkness and unable to move hand or foot. He was compressed in some way that he could not at first understand, and was being bumped and jolted in an extraordinary manner

---

A BRUSH WITH THE CHINESE.—VI.

It was some little time before he could understand the situation. He first remembered the fight with the junks, then he recalled the landing and burning the village; then, as his brain cleared, came the recollection of his start with Fothergill for the temple among the trees, his arrival there, and a loud report and flash of fire.

"I must have been knocked down and stunned," he said to himself, "and I suppose I am a prisoner now, and one of the fellows must be carrying me on his back."

Yes, he could understand it all now. His hands and his feet were tied, ropes were passed round his body in every direction, and he was fastened back to back upon the shoulders of a Chinaman. Percy remem-

bered the tales he had heard of the imprisonment and torture of those who fell into the hands of the Chinese, and he bitterly regretted that he had not been killed instead of stunned in the surprise of the temple.

"It would have been just the same feeling," he said to himself, "and there would have been an end of it. Now, there is no saying what is going to happen. I wonder whether Jack was killed, and the sailors."

Presently there was a jabber of voices; the motion ceased. Percy could feel that the cords were being unwound, and he was dropped on to his feet; then the cloth was removed from his head, and he could look round.

A dozen Chinese, armed with matchlocks and bristling with swords and daggers, stood around; and among them, bound like himself and gagged by a piece of bamboo forced lengthways across his mouth and kept there with a string going round the back of the head, stood Fothergill. He was bleeding from several cuts in the head. Percy's heart gave a bound of joy at finding that he was not alone.

Then he tried to feel sorry that Jack had

not escaped, but failed to do so; although he told himself that his comrade's presence would not in any way alleviate the fate which was certain to befall him. Still the thought of companionship, even in wretchedness, and perhaps a vague hope that Jack, with his energy and spirit, might contrive some way for their escape, cheered him up.

As Percy, too, was gagged, no word could be exchanged by the midshipmen, but they nodded to each other. They were now put side by side and made to walk in the centre of their captors. On the way they passed through several villages, whose inhabitants poured out to gaze at the captives; but the men in charge of them were evidently not disposed to delay, as they passed through without a stop. At last they halted before two cottages standing by themselves, thrust the prisoners into a small room, removed their gags, and left them to themselves.

A BRUSH WITH THE CHINESE.—VII.

"Well, Percy, my boy, so they caught you too? I am truly sorry. It was my fault for going with only two men into that temple; but as the village had been deserted and

scarcely a man was found there, it never entered my mind that there might be a party in the temple."

"Of course not, Jack; it was a surprise altogether. I don't know anything about it, for I was knocked down, I suppose, just as we went in, and the first thing I knew about it was that I was being carried on the back of one of those fellows. I thought it was awful at first, but I don't seem to mind so much now you are with me."

"It is a comfort to have someone to speak to," Jack said, "yet I wish you were not here, Percy; I can't do you any good, and I shall never cease blaming myself for having brought you into this scrape. I don't know much more about the affair than you do. The guns were fired so close to us that my face was scorched with one of them, and almost at the same instant I got a cut across my cheek with a sword.

"I had just time to hit at one of them, and then almost at the same moment I got two or three other blows, and down I went; they threw themselves on the top of me and tied and gagged me in no time. Then I was tied to a long bamboo, and two fellows put the ends on their shoulders and went off

with me through the fields. Of course I was face downwards, and did not know you were with us till they stopped and loosed me from the bamboo and set me on my feet."

"But what are they going to do with us, do you think, Jack?"

"I should say they are going to take us to Canton and claim a reward for our capture, and there I suppose they will cut off our heads or saw us in two, or put us to some other unpleasant kind of death. I expect they are discussing it now."

Voices were indeed heard raised in angry altercation in the next room. After a time the din subsided and the conversation appeared to take a more amiable turn.

"I suppose they have settled it as far as they are concerned," Jack said; "anyhow, you may be quite sure they mean to make something out of us. If they hadn't they would have finished us at once, for they must have been furious at the destruction of their junks and village.

"As to the idea that mercy has anything to do with it, we may as well put it out of our minds. The Chinaman, at the best of times, has no feeling of pity in his nature; and after their defeat it is certain they would have

killed us at once had they not hoped to do better by us. If they had been Indians I should have said they had carried us off to enjoy the satisfaction of torturing us, but I don't suppose it is that with them."

"Do you think there is any chance of our getting away?"

"I should say not the least in the world, Percy. My hands are fastened so tight now that the ropes seem cutting into my wrists, and after they had set me on my feet and cut the cords off my legs I could scarcely stand at first, my feet were so numbed by the pressure. However, we must keep up our pluck. Possibly they may keep us at Canton for a bit, and, if they do, the squadron may arrive and fight its way past the forts, and take the city before they have quite made up their minds as to what kind of death will be most appropriate to the occasion. I wonder what they are doing now? They seem to be chopping sticks."

"I wish they would give us some water," Percy said. "I am frightfully thirsty."

"And so am I, Percy. There is one comfort, they won't let us die of thirst; they could get no satisfaction out of our deaths now."

A BRUSH WITH THE CHINESE.—VIII.

Two hours later some of the Chinese re-entered the room and led the captives outside, and the lads then saw what was the meaning of the noise they had heard. A cage had been manufactured of strong bamboos. It was about four and a half feet long, four feet wide, and less than three feet high; above it were fastened two long bamboos. Two or three of the bars of the cage had been left open.

"My goodness! they never intend to put us in there," Percy exclaimed.

"That they do," Jack said. "They are going to carry us the rest of the way."

The cords which bound the prisoners' hands were now cut, and they were motioned to crawl into the cage. This they did. The bars were then put in their places and securely lashed. Four men went to the ends of the poles and lifted the cage upon their shoulders. Two others took their places beside it, and one man, apparently the leader of the party, walked on ahead. The rest remained behind.

"I never quite realized what a fowl felt in a coop before," Jack said, "but if its sensations are at all like mine they must be de-

cidedly unpleasant. It isn't high enough to sit upright in, it is nothing like long enough to lie down, and as to getting out one might as well think of flying. Do you know, Percy, I don't think they mean taking us to Canton at all. I did not think of it before, but from the direction of the sun I feel sure that we cannot have been going that way. What they are up to I can't imagine."

In an hour they came to a large village. Here the cage was set down and the villagers closed round. They were, however, kept a short distance from the cage by the men in charge of it. Then a wooden platter was placed on the ground, and persons throwing a few copper coins into this were allowed to come near the cage.

"They are making a show of us!" Fothergill exclaimed. "That's what they are up to; you see if it isn't. They are going to travel up country to show the whites whom their valour has captured."

This was, indeed, the purpose of the pirates. At that time Europeans seldom ventured beyond the limits assigned to them in the two or three towns where they were permitted to trade, and few, indeed, of the country people had ever obtained a sight of the

white barbarians of whose doings they had so frequently heard.

Consequently a small crowd soon gathered round the cage, eyeing the captives with the same interest they would have felt as to unknown and dangerous beasts. They laughed and joked, passed remarks upon them, and even poked them with sticks. Fothergill, furious at this treatment, caught one of the sticks, and wrenching it from the hands of the Chinaman, tried to strike at him through the bars, a proceeding which excited shouts of laughter from the bystanders.

"I think, Jack," Percy said, "it will be best to try and keep our tempers and not to seem to mind what they do to us; then if they find they can't get any fun out of us they will soon leave us alone."

"Of course, that's the best plan," Fothergill agreed, "but it's not so easy to follow. That fellow very nearly poked out my eye with his stick, and no one's going to stand that if he can help it."

It was some hours before the curiosity of the village was satisfied. When all had paid who were likely to do so, the guards broke up their circle, and leaving two of their number at the cage to see that no actual harm

was caused to their prisoners, the rest went off to a refreshment house.

A BRUSH WITH THE CHINESE.—IX.

The place of the elders was now taken by the boys and children of the village, who crowded round the cage, prodding the prisoners with sticks; and, putting their hands through the bars, pulled their ears and hair. This amusement, however, was brought to an abrupt conclusion by Fothergill suddenly seizing the wrist of a big boy and pulling his arm through the cage until his face was against the bars. Then he proceeded to beat him with his own stick until the guard, coming to his rescue, poked Fothergill until he released his hold.

The punishment of their comrade excited neither anger nor resentment among the other boys, who yelled with delight at his discomfiture; but it made them more careful in approaching the cage, and though they continued to poke the prisoners with sticks they did not venture again to thrust a hand through the bars. At sunset the guards again came round, lifted the cage, and carried it into a shed. A platter of dirty rice and

a jug of water were put into the cage; two of the men lighted their long pipes and sat down on guard beside it, and, the doors being closed, the captives were left in peace.

"If this sort of thing is to go on, as I suppose it is," Fothergill said, "the sooner they cut off our heads the better."

"It is very bad, Jack. I am sore all over with those prods from their sharp sticks."

"I don't care for the pain, Percy, so much as the humiliation of the thing. To be stared at and poked by these curs as if we were wild beasts, when with half a dozen of our men we could send a hundred of them scampering, I feel as if I could choke with rage."

"You had better try and eat some of this rice, Jack. It is not very nice, but I daresay we shall get no more until to-morrow night, and we must keep up our strength if we can. At any rate, the water is not bad, that's a comfort."

"No thanks to them," Jack growled. "If there had been any bad water in the neighbourhood they would have given it to us."

For three weeks the sufferings of the prisoners continued. Their captors avoided towns, where the authorities would probably

at once have taken the prisoners out of their hands.

No one would have recognized the two captives as the midshipmen of the *Perseus*. Their clothes were in rags—torn to pieces by the thrusts of the sharp-pointed bamboos, to which they had daily been subjected. The bad food, the cramped position, and the misery which they suffered had worn both lads to skeletons. Their hair was matted with filth; their faces begrimed with dirt.

Percy was so weak that he felt he could not stand. Fothergill, being three years older, was less exhausted; but he knew that he, too, could not support his sufferings for many days longer. Their bodies were covered with sores, and try as they would they were able to catch only a few minutes' sleep at a time, so much did the bamboo bars hurt their wasted limbs.

They seldom exchanged a word during the daytime, suffering in silence the persecutions to which they were exposed; but at night they talked about their homes and friends in England, and their comrades on board ship, seldom saying a word as to their present position. They were now in a hilly country, but had not the least idea of the

direction in which it lay from Canton or its distance from the coast.

A BRUSH WITH THE CHINESE.—X.

One evening Jack said to his companion, "I think it's nearly all over now, Percy. The last two days we have made longer journeys, and have not stopped at any of the smaller villages we passed through. I fancy our guards must see that we can't last much longer, and are taking us down to some town to hand us over to the authorities and get their reward for us."

"I hope it is so, Jack; the sooner the better. Not that it makes much difference now to me, for I do not think I can stand many more days of it."

"I am afraid I am tougher than you, Percy, and shall take longer to kill, so I hope with all my heart that I may be right, and that they may be going to give us up to the authorities."

The next evening they stopped at a large place, and were subjected to the usual persecution; this, however, was now less prolonged than during the early days of their captivity, for they had now no longer strength

or spirits to resent their treatment, and as no fun was to be obtained from passive victims, even the village boys soon ceased to find any amusement in tormenting them.

When most of their visitors had left them, an elderly Chinaman approached the side of the cage. He spoke to their guards and looked at them attentively for some minutes, then he said in pigeon English, "You officer men?"

"Yes!" Jack exclaimed, starting at the sound of the English words, the first they had heard spoken since their captivity. "Yes, we are officers of the *Perseus*."

"Me speeke English velly well," the Chinaman said; "me pilot-man many years on Canton river. How you get here?"

"We were attacking some piratical junks, and landed to destroy the village where the people were firing on us. We entered a place full of pirates, and were knocked down and taken prisoners, and carried away up the country; that is three weeks ago, and you see what we are now."

"Pirate men velly bad," the Chinaman said; "plunder many junk on river and kill crew. Me muchee hate them."

"Can you do anything for us?" Jack

asked. "You will be well rewarded if you could manage to get us free."

The man shook his head.

"Me no see what can do, me stranger here; come to stay with wifey; people no do what me ask them. English ships attack Canton, much fight and take town, people all hate English. Bad country dis. People in one village fight against another. Velly bad men here."

"How far is Canton away?" Jack asked. "Could you not send down to tell the English we are here?"

"Fourteen days' journey off," the man said; "no see how can do anything."

"Well," Jack said, "when you get back again to Canton let our people know what has been the end of us; we shall not last much longer."

"All light," the man said, "will see what me can do. Muchee think to-night!" And after saying a few words to the guards, who had been regarding this conversation with an air of surprise, the Chinaman retired.

The guards had for some time abandoned the precaution of sitting up at night by the cage, convinced that their captives had no longer strength to attempt to break through

its fastenings or to drag themselves many yards away if they could do so. They therefore left it standing in the open, and, wrapping themselves in their thickly-wadded coats, for the nights were cold, lay down by the side of the cage.

The coolness of the nights had, indeed, assisted to keep the two prisoners alive. During the day the sun was terribly hot, and the crowd of visitors round the cage impeded the circulation of the air and added to their sufferings. It was true that the cold at night frequently prevented them from sleeping, but it acted as a tonic and braced them up.

A BRUSH WITH THE CHINESE.—XI.

"What did he mean about the villages attacking each other?" Percy asked.

"I have heard," Jack replied, "that in some parts of China things are very much the same as they used to be in the Highlands of Scotland. There is no law or order. The different villages are like clans, and wage war on each other. Sometimes the government sends a number of troops, who put the thing down for a time, chop off a good

many heads, and then march away, and the whole work begins again as soon as their backs are turned."

That night the uneasy slumber of the lads was disturbed by a sudden firing; shouts and yells were heard, and the firing redoubled.

"The village is attacked," Jack said. "I noticed that, like some other places we have come into lately, there is a strong earthen wall round it, with gates. Well, there is one comfort—it does not make much difference to us which side wins."

The guards at the first alarm leapt to their feet, caught up their matchlocks, and ran to aid in the defence of the wall. Two minutes later a man ran up to the cage.

"All lightee," he said; "just what me hopee."

With his knife he cut the tough withes that held the bamboos in their places, and pulled out three of the bars.

"Come along," he said; "no time to lose."

Jack scrambled out, but in trying to stand upright gave a sharp exclamation of pain. Percy crawled out more slowly; he tried to stand up, but could not. The Chinaman caught him up and threw him on his shoulder.

"Come along quickee," he said to Jack;

"if takee village, kill evely one." He set off at a run. Jack followed as fast as he could, groaning at every step from the pain the movement caused to his bruised body.

They went to the side of the village opposite to that at which the attack was going on. They met no one on the way, the inhabitants having all rushed to the other side to repel the attack. They stopped at a small gate in the wall, the Chinaman drew back the bolts and opened it, and they passed out into the country. For an hour they kept on. By the end of that time Jack could scarcely drag his limbs along. The Chinaman halted at length in a clump of trees, surrounded by a thick undergrowth.

"Allee safee here," he said, "no searchee so far; here food;" and he produced from a wallet a cold chicken and some boiled rice, and unslung from his shoulder a gourd filled with cold tea.

"Me go back now, see what happen. Tomollow nightee come again—bringee more food." And without another word he went off at a rapid pace.

Jack moistened his lips with the tea, and then turned to his companion. Percy had not spoken a word since he had been released

from the cage, and had been insensible during the greater part of his journey. Jack poured some cold tea between his lips.

"Cheer up, Percy, old boy, we are free now, and with luck and that good fellow's help we will work our way down to Canton yet."

"I shall never get down there; you may," Percy said feebly.

"Oh, nonsense! you will pick up strength like a steam-engine now. Here, let me prop you against this tree. That's better. Now drink a drop of this tea; it's like nectar after that filthy water we have been drinking. Now you will feel better. Now you must try and eat a little of this chicken and rice. Oh, nonsense! you have got to do it. I am not going to let you give way when our trouble is just over.

"Think of your people at home, Percy, and make an effort for their sakes. Good heavens! now I think of it, it must be Christmas morning. We were caught on the second, and we have been just twenty-two days on show. I am sure that it must be past twelve o'clock, and it is Christmas-day. It is a good omen, Percy. This food isn't like roast beef and plum-pudding, but it is

not to be despised, I can tell you. Come, now, take some; that's a good fellow."

A BRUSH WITH THE CHINESE.—XII.

Percy made an effort, and ate a few mouthfuls of rice and chicken, then he took another draught of tea, and lay down, and was almost immediately asleep.

Jack ate his food slowly and contentedly till he finished half the supply, then he too lay down, and, after a short but hearty thanksgiving for his escape from a slow and lingering death, fell asleep. The sun was rising when he awoke. He opened his eyes and sat up.

"Well, Percy, how do you feel this morning?" he asked cheerily.

"I feel too weak to move," Percy replied languidly.

"Oh, you will be all right when you have sat up and eaten breakfast," Jack said "Here you are; here is a wing for you, and this rice is as white as snow, and the tea is first-rate. I thought last night after I lay down that I heard a murmur of water, so after we have had breakfast I will look about and see if I can find it. We should feel like

new men after a wash. You look awful, and I am sure I am just as bad."

The thought of a wash cheered Percy far more than that of eating, and he sat up and made a great effort to do justice to breakfast. He succeeded much better than he had done the night before, and Jack, although he pretended to grumble, was satisfied with his companion's progress, and finished off the rest of the food. Then he set out to search for water.

He had not very far to go. A tiny stream, a few inches wide and two or three inches deep, ran through the wood from the higher ground. After throwing himself down and taking a drink he hurried back to Percy.

"It is all right, Percy, I have found it. We can wash to our hearts' content; think of that, lad."

Percy could hardly stand, but he made an effort, and Jack half carried him to the streamlet. There the lads spent hours. First they bathed their heads and hands, and then stripping, lay down in the stream and allowed it to flow over them; then they rubbed themselves with handfuls of leaves dipped in the water; and when they at last put on their rags again they felt like new men.

Percy was able to walk back to the spot they had quitted, with the assistance only of Jack's arm. The latter, feeling that his breakfast had by no means appeased his hunger, now started for a search through the wood, and presently returned to Percy laden with nuts and berries.

"The nuts are sure to be all right; I expect the berries are too. I have certainly seen some like them in native markets, and I think it will be quite safe to risk it."

The rest of the day was spent in picking nuts and eating them. Then they sat down and waited for the arrival of their friend. He came two hours after nightfall with a wallet stored with provisions, and told them that he had regained the village unobserved. The attack had been repulsed, but with severe loss to the defenders as well as to the assailants. Two of their guards had been among the killed.

The others had made a great clamour over the escape of the prisoners, and had made a close search throughout the village and immediately round it, for they were convinced that their captives had not had the strength to go any distance. He thought, however, that although they had professed

the greatest indignation, and had offered many threats as to the vengeance the government would take upon the village, they would not trouble themselves any further in the matter.

They had already reaped a rich harvest from the exhibition, and would divide among themselves the share of their late comrades. Nor was it at all unlikely that, if they were to report the matter to the authorities, they would themselves get into serious trouble for not having handed over the prisoners immediately after their capture.

A BRUSH WITH THE CHINESE.—XIII.

For a fortnight the old pilot nursed and fed the two midshipmen. He had already provided them with native clothes, so that if by chance any villagers should catch sight of them they would not recognize them as the escaped white men.

At the end of that time both the lads had almost recovered from the effects of their sufferings. Jack, indeed, had picked up from the first, but Percy for some days continued so weak and ill that Jack had feared

that he was going to have an attack of fever of some kind.

His companion's cheery and hopeful chat did as much good for Percy as the nourishing food with which their friend supplied them; and at the end of the fortnight he declared that he felt sufficiently strong to attempt to make his way down to the coast.

The pilot acted as their guide. When they inquired about his wife, he told them carelessly that she would remain with her kinsfolk, and would travel on to Canton and join him there when she found an opportunity. The journey was accomplished at night, by very short stages at first, but by increasing distances as Percy gained strength.

During the daytime the lads lay hid in woods or jungles, while their companion went into a village and purchased food. They struck the river many miles above Canton, and the pilot, going down first to a village on its banks, bargained for a boat to take him and two women down to the city.

The lads went on board at night and took their places in the little cabin, formed of bamboos and covered with mats, in the stern of the boat, and remained thus sheltered not only from the view of people in boats pass-

ing up or down the stream, but from the eyes of their own boatmen.

After two days' journey down the river without incident, they arrived off Canton, where the British fleet was still lying while negotiations for peace were being carried on with the authorities at Pekin. Peeping out between the mats, the lads caught sight of the English warships, and, knowing that there was now no danger, they dashed out of the cabin, to the surprise of the native boatmen, and shouted and waved their arms to the distant ships.

In ten minutes they were alongside the *Perseus*, when they were hailed as if restored from the dead.

The pilot was very handsomely rewarded by the English authorities for his kindness to the prisoners, and was highly satisfied with the result of his proceedings, which more than doubled the little capital with which he had retired from business. Jack Fothergill and Percy Adcock declare that they have never since eaten chicken without thinking of their Christmas fare on the morning of their escape from the hands of the Chinese pirates.

THE BLACK DEATH.

FROM "ST. GEORGE FOR ENGLAND."

[Sir Walter Somers, a young knight who had distinguished himself under the Black Prince at Crecy and Poitiers, married Edith Vernon; and, during a lull in the fighting with France, settled down in his castle at Westerham. He had a deadly enemy in a knight who was a relation of his wife's, and whom he had thwarted in an attempt made on her in order to inherit the property.

The terrible plague known in history as the Black Death (1348–49), which carried off two-thirds of the population of England, breaks out. When the plague reaches the village, Sir Walter goes down with his faithful retainer Ralph to comfort the frightened people.]

They found the village in a state of panic. Women were sitting crying despairingly at their doors. Some were engaged in packing their belongings in carts ready for flight. Some wandered aimlessly about, wringing their hands, while others went to the church, whose bells were mournfully tolling the knell of the departed.

Walter's presence soon restored something like order and confidence; his resolute tone cheered the timid and gave hope to the despairing. Sternly he rebuked those preparing to fly, and ordered them instantly to

replace their goods in their houses. Then he went to the priest and implored him to cause the tolling of the bell to cease.

"There is enough," he said, "in the real danger present to appal even the bravest, and we need no bell to tell us that death is among us. The dismal tolling is enough to unnerve the stoutest heart, and if we ring for all who die, its sounds will never cease while the plague is among us; therefore, father, I implore you to discontinue it.

"Let there be services held daily in the church, but I beseech you strive to cheer the people rather than to depress them, and to dwell more upon the joys that await those who die as Christian men and women than upon the sorrows of those who remain behind. My wife and mother will soon be down in the village and will strive to cheer and comfort the people, and I look to you for aid in this matter."

The priest, who was naturally a timid man, nevertheless nerved himself to carry out Walter's suggestions, and soon the dismal tones of the bell ceased to be heard in the village.

Walter despatched messengers to all the outlying farms, desiring his tenants to meet

him that afternoon at the castle, in order that steps might be taken for common aid. An hour later Dame Vernon and Edith came down and visited all the houses where the plague had made its appearance, distributing their soups, and by cheering and comforting words raising the spirits of the relatives of the sufferers.

The names of all the women ready to aid in the work of nursing were taken down, and in the afternoon at the meeting at the castle the full arrangements were completed. Work was to be carried on as usual in order to occupy men's minds, and prevent them from brooding over the awful effects of the plague.

Information of any case that occurred was to be sent to the castle, where soups and medicines were to be obtained. Whenever more assistance was required than could be furnished by the inmates of a house, another woman was to be sent to aid. Boys were told off as messengers to fetch food and other things as required from the castle.

So, bravely and firmly, they prepared to meet the pestilence; it spread with terrible severity. There was scarcely a house which did not lose some of its inmates, while in

others whole families were swept away. All day Walter and his wife and Dame Vernon went from house to house. Although they could do nothing to stay the progress of the pestilence, their presence and example supported the survivors, and prevented the occurrence of any of the panic and disorder which in most places accompanied it.

THE BLACK DEATH.—II.

The castle was not exempt from the scourge. First some of the servants were seized, and three men and four women died. Walter himself was attacked, but he took it lightly, and three days after the seizure passed into a state of convalescence.

Dame Vernon was next attacked, and expired six hours after the commencement of her illness. Scarcely was Walter upon his feet than Ralph, who had not for a moment left his bedside, was seized, but he too, after being at death's door for some hours, turned the corner. Lastly Edith sickened.

By this time the scourge had done its worst in the village, and three-fifths of the population had been swept away. All the

male retainers in the castle had died, and the one female who survived was nursing her dying mother in the village. Edith's attack was a very severe one.

Walter, alone now,—for Ralph, although convalescent, had not yet left his bed,—sat by his wife's bedside a prey to anxiety and grief; for although she had resisted the first attack, she was now, thirty-six hours after it had seized her, fast sinking. Gradually her sight and power of speech failed, and she lay quiet and motionless, and it seemed as if life had already departed.

Suddenly Walter was surprised by the sound of many heavy feet ascending the stairs. He went out into the ante-room to learn the cause of this strange tumult, when five armed men, one of whom was masked, rushed into the room. Walter caught up his sword from the table.

"Ruffians!" he exclaimed, "how dare you thus dishonour the abode of death?"

Without a word the men sprang upon him. For a minute he defended himself against their attacks, but he was still weak; his guard was beaten down, and a blow felled him to the ground.

"Now settle her!" the masked man ex-

claimed, and the band rushed into the adjoining room. They paused, however, at the door at the sight of the lifeless figure on the couch.

"We are saved that trouble," one said; "we have come too late."

The masked figure approached the couch and bent over the figure.

"Yes," he said, "she is dead, and so much the better."

Then he returned with the others to Walter.

"He breathes yet," he said. "He needs a harder blow than that you gave him to finish him. Let him lie here for a while, while you gather your booty together; then we will carry him off. There is scarcely a soul alive in the country round, and none will note us as we pass.

"If we killed him here his body would be found with wounds upon it, and even in these times some inquiry might be made; therefore it were best to finish him elsewhere. When he is missed it will be supposed that he went mad at the death of his wife, and has wandered out and died, maybe in the woods, or has drowned himself in a pond or stream. Besides, I would that before he dies he should know what hand has struck

the blow, and that my vengeance, which he slighted and has twice escaped, has overtaken him at last."

THE BLACK DEATH.—III.

After ransacking the principal rooms and taking all that was valuable, the band of marauders lifted the still insensible body of Walter, and carrying it downstairs flung it across a horse. One of the ruffians mounted behind it, and the others also getting into their saddles, the party rode away.

They were mistaken, however, in supposing that the Lady Edith was dead. She was indeed very nigh the gates of death, and had it not been for the disturbance would assuredly have speedily entered them. The voice of her husband raised in anger, the clash of steel, followed by the heavy fall, had awakened her dazed senses.

Consciousness had at once partly returned to her, but as yet no power of movement. She had heard the words of those who entered her chamber as if they were spoken afar off.

More and more distinctly she heard their movements about the room, but it was not

until silence was restored that she came to herself completely. Then with a sudden rush the blood seemed to course through her veins, her eyes opened, and her tongue was loosed, and with a scream she sprang up and stood by the side of her bed.

She hurried into the next room. A pool of blood on the floor showed her that what she had heard had not been a dream. Snatching up a cloak of her husband's which lay on a couch, she wrapped it round her, and with hurried steps made her way along the passages until she reached the apartment occupied by Ralph. The latter sprang up in bed with a cry of astonishment.

He had heard but an hour before from Walter that all hope was gone, and thought for an instant that the figure he saw was an apparition from the dead. The ghastly pallor of the face, the eyes burning with a strange light, the wild hair and disordered appearance of the lady might well have alarmed one living in even less superstitious times. Ralph was beginning to cross himself hastily and to mutter a prayer, when he was recalled to himself by the sound of Edith's voice.

"Quick, Ralph!" she said, "arise and

clothe yourself. Hasten for your life. My lord's enemies have fallen upon him and wounded him grievously, even if they have not slain him, and have carried him away. They would have slain me also had they not thought I was already dead. Arise and mount, summon everyone still alive in the village, and follow these murderers. I will pull the alarm-bell of the castle."

Ralph sprang from his bed as Edith left. He had heard the sound of many footsteps in the knight's apartments, but had deemed them those of the priest come to administer the last rites of the church to his dying mistress. Rage and anxiety for his master gave strength to his limbs. He threw on a few clothes and rushed down to the stables, where the horses stood with great piles of forage and pails of water before them, placed there two days before by Walter when their last attendant died. Without waiting to saddle it Ralph sprang upon the back of one of the animals, and taking the halters of four others started at a gallop down to the village.

THE BLACK DEATH.—IV.

His news spread like wildfire; for the ringing of the alarm-bell of the castle had drawn all to their doors and prepared them for something strange. Some of the men had already taken their arms and were making their way up to the castle when they met Ralph. There were but five men in the village who had altogether escaped the pestilence; others had survived its attacks, but were still weak. Horses there were in plenty. The five men mounted at once, with three others who, though still weak, were still able to ride.

So great was the excitement that seven women, who had escaped the disease, armed themselves with their husbands' swords and leaped on horseback, declaring that, women though they were, they would strike a blow for their beloved lord, who had been as an angel in the village during the plague.

Thus it was scarcely more than ten minutes after the marauders had left the castle before a motley band, fifteen strong, headed by Ralph, rode off in pursuit, while some of the women of the village hurried up to the castle to comfort Edith with the tidings that the

pursuit had already commenced. Fortunately a lad in the fields had noticed the five men ride away from the castle, and was able to point out the direction they had taken.

At a furious gallop Ralph and his companions tore across the country. Mile after mile was passed. Once or twice they gained news from labourers in the field of the passage of those before them, and knew that they were on the right track.

They had now entered a wild and sparsely inhabited country. It was broken and rolling, so that although they knew that the men they were pursuing were but a short distance ahead they had not yet caught sight of them. They hoped that, having no reason to dread any immediate pursuit, these would soon slacken their pace. This expectation was realized, for on coming over a brow they saw the party halted at a turf-burner's cottage in the hollow below.

Three of the men had dismounted; two of them were examining the hoof of one of the horses, which had apparently cast a shoe or trodden upon a stone. Ralph had warned his party to make no sound when they came upon the fugitives. The sound of the horses' hoofs was deadened by the turf, and they

were within a hundred yards of the marauders before they were perceived; then Ralph uttered a shout, and brandishing their swords the party rode down at a headlong gallop.

The dismounted men leaped to their saddles and galloped off at full speed, but their pursuers were now close upon them. Ralph and two of his companions, who were mounted upon Walter's best horses, gained upon them at every stride. Two of them were overtaken and run through.

The man who bore Walter before him, finding himself being rapidly overtaken, threw his burden on to the ground just as the leader of the party had checked his horse and was about to deliver a sweeping blow at the insensible body.

With a curse at his follower for ridding himself of it, he again galloped on. The man's act was unavailing to save himself, for he was overtaken and cut down before he had ridden many strides; then Ralph and his party instantly reined up to examine the state of Walter, who was found to be still breathing, and the two survivors of the band of murderers continued their flight unmolested.

THE WHITE SHIP.

FROM "THE REIGN OF TERROR."

[Harry Sandwith was acting as companion to the sons of a great French noble when the Revolution broke out. The marquis and his wife were massacred by the mob. Their sons, in trying to make their escape from the country, were seized and put to death. Harry Sandwith found himself left in charge of the two daughters, who, accompanied by an old nurse, travelled with him in disguise to Nantes. Here they lived in seclusion for a time, Harry trying to obtain a passage for them in a smuggling craft.

Nantes is in the hands of the Revolutionists, who, under the direction of the infamous Carrier, the Commissioner from Paris, are massacring wholesale all suspected of hostility. There is much illness and distress in the town, and the ladies by their kindness to the sick win the hearts of some of the sailors, so that, finally, arrangements for escape are made.

Before they can be carried out, however, the girls are seized and thrown into prison. The ordinary modes of execution being found too slow to clear the prisons of the numbers of those brought in daily under the charge of being aristocrats, Carrier organized what are known in history as the *Noyades*. He procured a number of boats, and had them moored in the middle of the stream. The prisoners—men, women, and children—were placed on board. Holes were cut in the bottom to cause the craft to sink, while troops lined the river and fired with artillery and musketry at those who endeavoured to swim to shore.

Harry, hearing of this infamous design, and learning which craft the girls were to be placed on, determines to effect their rescue. He is taken on board the boat at night, and with the assistance of the sailors prepares the hatchway of the cabin as

a means of escape. The sailors then row off, and leave him to himself.]

When left alone Harry blew out the other candles, but left that in the lantern burning, and threw himself down on the locker and thought over every detail of the work for the next day. As he had said, the great danger was of Virginie struggling and being too frightened to follow his instructions. Certainly he could fasten a rope round her, but even then it might be difficult to manage her. The next danger was, that other persons might cling to the hatchway. Harry felt the long knife which was concealed in his breast.

"God grant I may not have to use it!" he said; "but, if it must be, I shall not hesitate. They would simply destroy us without saving themselves, that is certain. Therefore I am justified in defending the girls, as I would against any other enemy."

He knelt down and prayed for some time. Then he replaced the piece they had cut out from the hatch, fixed the beams beneath it, and lay down again. He was worn out by the excitement of the day, and in spite of his anxiety about the morrow he presently fell off to sleep.

It was long before he woke. When he

did so, he looked through one of the auger-holes into the hold and saw the light streaming down the open hatchway, and could tell that the sun was already up.

He ate the food which Marthe had put into his pocket just as he was starting; saw that the bundles of corks were ready at hand, and the ropes attached to them so placed that they could be fastened on in an instant. Then there was nothing to do but to wait.

The time passed slowly. Presently he heard the sound of drums and bugles, and knew that the troops were taking up their positions on the quays. At last—it seemed many hours to him—he heard the splash of oars, and presently felt a slight shock as a boat ran alongside the lugger. Then there were voices, and the sound of feet above as persons mounted on to the deck. There was a scraping noise by the lugger's side, and immediately afterwards another bump as the second boat took the place of the first.

This, as far as Harry could hear, did not leave the lugger. There was a great hum of talking on deck, principally in women's voices, and persons so often stepped on the hatch, that Harry was glad the beams gave a solid support to it.

THE WHITE SHIP.—II.

Half an hour passed, as well as Harry could judge; then the boom of a cannon was heard, and immediately two men leapt down into the hold, knocked the six plugs out of their place, and climbed up on deck again. There was again the scraping noise, and Harry knew the boat had pushed off this time for good. He watched the six jets of water for a minute or two. Then saying to himself, "It is time," he knocked the beams from their ledges, allowed the square of wood to fall, lifted the hatch, and pushed it off its combing, and clambered on to the deck with the corks and ropes.

There were some fifty persons on board, for the most part women and children, but with two or three men among them. They were gathered near the stern, and were apparently watching the scene ashore with astonishment. He hurried aft, having no fear that at this distance from the shore his figure would be recognized from the rest, and if it were it mattered not. Two or three turned round as the supposed sailor came aft, exclaiming:

"What does this mean? Why are we put

here on board these white ships? What are they going to do with us?"

"Alas, ladies!" he said, "they have put you here to die; they have bored holes in the ships' bottoms, and in a few minutes they will sink. It is a wholesale execution."

As he began to speak one of the ladies in the stern pushed her way through the rest.

"Oh, Harry, is it you!" she exclaimed as he finished. "Is it true, are we to die together?"

"We are in God's hands, Jeanne, but there is hope yet. Bring Virginie forward with me."

At Harry's first words a panic had seized all around; one or two ran to the hatchway and looked down into the hold, and screamed out that the water was rushing in; then some cried to the distant crowd to send to save them; others ran up and down as if demented; while some threw themselves on their knees.

But the panic soon passed away. All had for weeks looked death in the face; and though the unexpected form in which it appeared had for the moment shaken them, they soon recovered. Mothers clasped their daughters to their breasts for a last farewell, and then all with bowed heads kneeled and

listened in silence to an old man who began to pray aloud.

Jeanne, without another word, had taken Virginie's hands and accompanied Harry forward to the fore part of the deck.

"Jeanne, I am going to try to save you and Virginie, but everything depends upon your being cool and brave. I need not urge you, because I am sure of you. Virginie, will you try to be cool for Jeanne's sake and your own? If you do not we must all die together."

"What are we to do, Harry?" Jeanne said steadily; while Virginie clung to her sister, sobbing bitterly.

"Fasten this bundle of corks between Virginie's shoulders, high up—yes, there."

THE WHITE SHIP.—III.

While Jeanne was doing this, Harry fastened a rope to a ring in the side of the hatch; then he tied the corks on to Jeanne's shoulders, and adjusted the third bundle to his own.

"Now, Jeanne," he said, "I will tell you what we are to do. You see this hatch; when the vessel sinks it will float, and we

must float on our backs with our faces underneath it, so that it will hide us from the sight of the wretches on shore. Even if they put out in boats to kill any who may be swimming or clinging to spars, they will not suspect that there is anyone under this. We may not succeed; an accident may betray us, but there is a possibility. At any rate, dear, we shall live or die together."

"I am content," Jeanne said quietly.

"You know, Jeanne," Harry said, putting his hands on the girl's shoulders, "that I love you. I should never have told you so until we had got home if it hadn't been for this; but though I have never said it, you know I love you."

"I know, Harry; and I love you too with all my heart—so much, that I can feel almost happy that we are to die together."

As Jeanne finished speaking, there was a sudden crash. Impatient at the length of time the vessels were in sinking, those ashore had opened fire with cannons upon them, and the shot had struck the lugger just above the water.

With a little cry Virginie fell senseless on the deck.

"That's the best thing that could have

happened," Harry said as Jeanne stooped over her sister. "Lie down on the deck, dear, or you may be struck; they are firing with muskets now. I am going to lie down too," he said in answer to her look, "but I shall first twist this cord round Virginie so as to keep her arms by her side, otherwise when the water touches her she may come to her senses and struggle. That's all right."

Then he lay down on the deck between the girls, with his head against the hatch and holding the rope.

"Put your head on my shoulder, Jeanne, and I will put my arm round you. I will hold Virginie the same way the other side. Hold tight by me for a moment as we sink. I may have to use my arms to get the hatch over our faces. Do not breathe while you are under the water, for we shall, no doubt, go down with the lugger, although I shall try to keep you afloat. When you are under the hatch you will find you will float with your mouth well out of water, and will be able to breathe; the corks will keep you up."

"I understand, Harry; now let us pray until the time comes."

Shot after shot struck the lugger, then Harry felt her give a sudden lurch. There

was a wild cry, and the next moment she went down stern first. She was so nearly even with the water when she sank that there was less downward suck than Harry had expected, and striking out with his feet his head was soon above the surface.

The cord had kept the hatch within a couple of feet of him, and with some difficulty, owing to the buoyancy of the corks, he thrust himself and the girls under it. The tarpaulin was old and rotten, and the light penetrated in several places, and Harry could see that, in the position in which they were lying, the faces of both girls were above the water.

It was useless to speak, for their ears were submerged; but a slight motion from Jeanne responded to a pressure of his arm, and he knew that she was sensible, although she had not made the slightest motion from the moment the vessel sank.

THE WHITE SHIP.—IV.

Virginie had not, as he feared would be the case, recovered her senses with the shock of the immersion, but lay insensible on his shoulder. He could see by the movement

of Jeanne's lips that she was praying, and he too thanked God that He had given success to the plan so far, and prayed for protection to the end.

With every minute that passed his hopes rose; everything had answered beyond his expectation. The other victims had apparently not even noticed what he was doing, and therefore had not, as he feared might be the case, interfered with his preparations, nor had any of them striven to gain a hold on the hatchway.

The sinking of the vessel, and the tearing up of the water by the shot, would render the surface disturbed and broken, and decrease the chances of the floating hatch attracting attention. After ten minutes had passed he felt certain that they must be below the point where the troops were assembled.

The tide was running out strong, for the time for the massacre had been fixed at an hour which would ensure the bodies being swept down to the sea. Half an hour would, he thought, take them past the bend, where their friends would be waiting for them.

The time seemed endless, for although Harry felt the coldness of the water but little for himself, he knew that it must be trying

indeed for Jeanne. As far as he could see her face it was as white as her sister's; but he had hold of one of her hands now, and knew that she was still conscious.

At last he heard the sound of oars. It might not be one of the friendly boats; but the probability was that it was one or other of them. Had they seen any other fisherman's boat near the point, they would have rowed high up so as to intercept the hatch before it reached the stranger. Harry could not hear voices; for although the water had conveyed the sound of the oars a considerable distance, he could hear no sound in the air.

The oars came nearer and nearer, and by the quickness with which the strokes followed each other he knew that two boats were at hand. Then the hatch was suddenly lifted, and as Harry raised his head above water there was a loud cheer, and he saw Adolphe and Pierre, one on each side, stretch out their arms to him.

The girls were first lifted into Pierre's boat, for Jeanne was as unable to move as her sister; then Harry was dragged in, the rough sailors shaking his hand and patting him on the shoulder, while the tears ran down their cheeks.

As soon as Jeanne was able to sit up she began to chafe one of Virginie's hands, while Harry took the other.

"Take off her shoes, Pierre, and soak a cloth with the hot water and put it to her feet."

But with all these efforts it was not until they were close to Pierre's village that Virginie opened her eyes. When they arrived at the little causeway the two girls were wrapped up in the peasants' cloaks which Pierre had brought with him. Jeanne took Harry's arm, while Adolphe lifted Virginie and carried her up. Henriette was standing at the door as Jeanne staggered in with Harry.

"That is right, Mademoiselle. Thank God who has brought you safe through the danger. Now, do not stop a moment, but come in here and get into bed, it is all ready for you. The blankets have been before the fire until the moment you landed; they will soon give you warmth. And do you, Monsieur Sandwith, hurry up to the loft and get on dry clothes."

[Finally they succeeded in getting on board a smuggling lugger, and arrived safely in England.]

THE CHILD'S RETURN.

FROM "WITH WOLFE IN CANADA."

[Squire Linthorne's son had married the daughter of an ex-sergeant in the army, who kept a lodging-house at Southampton. He had married her in defiance of his father, and in spite too of the sergeant, who would not give his consent to the marriage unless the squire also gave his approval. The young couple had fallen into poverty.

The squire, who always intended finally to forgive his son, travelled on the Continent, and on his return found a letter from his dying son, dated from a place in the south of France. He travelled there post-haste, but arrived too late; his son and his young wife were both dead. A child had been born, but had been taken away by the wife's father, who had been with them at the last.

The squire had tried every means to obtain a clue to the whereabouts of his granddaughter, but had failed, and had settled down a solitary and broken-hearted man on his estate near Sidmouth. In the meantime the sergeant, who was ignorant that the squire had ever at heart forgiven his son, and who believed that he had refused to come to see him even on his death-bed, had brought up the child.

After the death of his daughter he had travelled the country with a peep-show, taking the little one with him. When she was five or six years old he had placed her with a schoolmistress at Sidmouth, considering that although it would be terrible to him to part with her, it was but right that the squire should at least have the opportunity of taking his granddaughter to live with him. John Petersham, the squire's old butler, undertook to introduce the little girl to his master.]

That evening the squire was sitting by

himself in the great dining-room. The curtains were drawn and the candles lighted, for it was late in September, and the evenings were closing in fast, and the squire was puzzling over John Petersham's behaviour at dinner.

Although the squire was not apt to observe closely what was passing around him, he had been struck with the old butler's manner; that something was wrong with him was clear. Usually he was the most quiet and methodical of servants, but he had blundered several times in the service. He had handed his master dishes when his plate was already supplied; he had started nervously when spoken to. Mr. Linthorne even thought that he had seen tears in his eyes; altogether he was strangely unlike himself.

Mr. Linthorne had asked him if anything was the matter, but John had with almost unnecessary earnestness declared there was nothing. Altogether the squire was puzzled.

Presently the door of the room quietly opened. The squire did not look up. It closed again as quietly, and then he glanced towards it. He could hardly believe his eyes. A child was standing there—a girl with soft smooth hair and large eyes and a

sensitive mouth, with an expression fearless but appealing. Her hands were clasped before her, and she was standing, in doubt whether to advance.

There was something so strange in this apparition in the lonely room that the squire did not speak for a moment. It flashed across him vaguely that there was something familiar to him in the face and expression, something which sent a thrill through him; and at the same instant, without knowing why, he felt that there was a connection between the appearance of the child and the matter he had just been thinking of—John Petersham's strange conduct. He was still looking at her when she advanced quietly towards him.

"Grandpapa," she said, "I am Aggie Linthorne."

A low cry of astonishment broke from the squire. He pushed his chair back.

"Can it be true," he muttered, "or am I dreaming?"

"Yes, grandpapa," the child said, close beside him now, "I am Aggie Linthorne, and I have come to see you. If you don't think it's me, grampa said I was to give you this and then you would know;" and she held

out a miniature on ivory of a boy some fourteen years old, and a watch and chain.

"I do not need them," the squire said in low tones, "I see it in your face. You are Herbert's child, whom I looked for so long. Oh! my child! my child! have you come at last?" and he drew her towards him and kissed her passionately, while the tears streamed down his cheeks.

THE CHILD'S RETURN.—II.

"I couldn't come before, you know," the child said, "because I didn't know about you, and grampa—that's my other grandpapa, you know—did not know you wanted me; but now he knows he sent me to you. He told me I was to come because you were lonely; but you can't be more lonely than he is," she said, with a quiver in her voice. "Oh! he will be lonely now!"

"But where did you come from, my dear, and how did you get here, and what have you been doing all these years?"

"Grampa brought me here," the child said. "I call him grampa, you know, because I did when I was little, and I have always kept to it; but I know, of course, it

ought to be grandpapa. He brought me here, and John—at least he called him John —brought me in. And I have been living for two years with Mrs. Walsham down in the town, and I used to see you in church, but I did not know that you were my grandpapa."

The squire, who was holding her close to him while she spoke, got up and rang the bell, and John opened the door with a quickness that showed that he had been standing close to it, anxiously waiting a summons.

"John Petersham," the squire said, "give me your hand; this is the happiest day of my life!"

The two men wrung each other's hands. They had been friends ever since John Petersham, who was twelve years the senior of the two, first came to the house, a young fellow of eighteen, to assist his father, who had held the same post before him.

"God be thanked, squire!" he said huskily.

"God be thanked, indeed, John!" the squire rejoined reverently. "So this was the reason, old friend, why your hand shook as you poured out my wine. How could you keep the secret from me?"

"I did not know how to begin to tell you, but I was pretty nigh letting it out, and only the thought that it was better the little lady should tell you herself, as we had agreed, kept it in. Only to think, squire, after all these years! but I never quite gave her up. I always thought somehow that she would come just like this."

"Did you, John? I gave up hope years ago. How did it come about, John?"

"Mrs. Walsham told me as I came out of church to-day that she wanted to speak to me, so I went down, and she told me all about it, and then I saw him—"

John hesitated at the name, for he knew that perhaps the only man in the world against whom his master cherished a bitter resentment was the father of his son's wife.

"It seems he never saw your advertisements, never knew you wanted to hear anything of the child, so he took her away and kept her. He has been here off and on all these years. I heard of him often and often when I had been down into Sidmouth, but never dreamt it was him. He went about the country with a box on wheels with glasses —a peep-show they call it."

The squire winced.

"He is well spoken of, squire," John said, "and I am bound to say he doesn't seem the sort of man we took him for at all. He did not know that you wanted to have her, but he thought it his duty to give her the chance, and so he put her with Mrs. Walsham, and never told her till yesterday who she was. Mrs. Walsham was quite grieved at parting with her, for she says she is wonderfully quick at her lessons, and has been like a daughter with her for the last two years."

THE CHILD'S RETURN.—III.

The child had sat quietly down in a chair and was looking into the fire while the two men were speaking. She had done what she had been told to do, and was waiting quietly for what was to come next. Her quick ear, however, noticed that John Petersham spoke of her old grandfather as though he needed to be excused for something, and she was moved to instant anger.

"Why do you speak like that of my grampa?" she said, rising to her feet and standing indignantly before him. "He is the best man in the world, and the kindest

and the nicest, and if you don't like him I can go away to him again. I don't want to stay here, not one minute.

"You may be my grandpapa," she went on, turning to the squire, "and you may be lonely, but he is lonely too, and you have got a great house and all sorts of nice things, and you can do better without me than he can, for he has got nothing to love but me, poor grampa!" and her eyes filled with sudden tears as she thought of him tramping on his lonely walks over the hills.

"We do not mean to speak unkindly of your grandfather, my dear," the squire said gently. "I have never seen him, you know, and John has never seen him but once. I have thought all these years bitterly of him, but perhaps I have been mistaken. He has ever been kind and good to you, and, above all, he has given you back to me, and that will make me think differently of him in future. We all make mistakes, you know, and I have made terrible mistakes, and have been terribly punished for them. I daresay I have made a mistake here; but whether or no, you shall never hear a word from me against the man who has been so kind to you."

"And you will let me see him sometimes, grandpapa?" the child said, taking his hand pleadingly. "He said if you said no I must do as you told me, because somehow you are nearer to me than he is, though I don't know how that can be; but you won't say that, will you? for, oh! I know he is so lonely without me, and I should never be happy thinking of him all alone, not if you were to be ever so kind to me and to give me all sorts of grand things."

"No, my dear, I certainly shall not say so. You shall see him as often as you like."

"Oh, thank you, grandpapa!" she exclaimed joyfully, and she held up her face to kiss him.

The squire lifted her in his arms and held her closely to him.

"John," he said, "you must tell Mrs. Morcombe to get a room ready for my granddaughter at once, and you had better bring the tea in here, and then we will think of other things. I feel quite bewildered at present."

THE

BLACK HOLE OF CALCUTTA.

FROM "WITH CLIVE IN INDIA."

[In 1756, when the British footing in India was by no means assured, Calcutta was attacked by a native prince or nabob, Suraja Dowlah, with a force of 50,000 men. The whole British force in Calcutta numbered 140 men, including sepoys, and the governor was a weak and incompetent man. The defences of the town were quite useless owing to the fact that buildings of all sorts had been allowed to be put up outside the fort. It was a simple matter for the enemy to take possession of these and so command both fort and town.

Mr. Drake, the governor, and Captain Michin, commander of the forces, were cowardly enough to desert their charge and seek safety on board a man-of-war in the harbour. Upon this a civilian, Mr. Holwell, was elected by the Europeans to take command of the town, and Charlie Marryat, a young officer, is put in command of the troops.]

With daybreak the attack recommenced, but the garrison all day bravely repulsed every attempt of the enemy to gain a footing. The fire from the houses was, however, so severe, that by nightfall nearly half the garrison were killed or wounded. All day the signals to the fleet were kept flying, but not a ship moved.

All night an anxious watch was kept, in

hopes that at the last moment some returning feeling of shame might induce the recreants to send up the boats of the ships. But the night passed without a movement on the river, and in the morning the fleet were seen still lying at anchor.

The enemy recommenced the attack even more vigorously than before. The men fell fast, and, to Charlie's great grief, his friend Mr. Haines was shot by a bullet as he was standing next to him. Charlie anxiously knelt beside him.

"It is all over with me," he murmured. "Poor little Ada. Do all you can for her, Marryat. God knows what fate is in store for her."

"I will protect her with my life, sir," Charlie said earnestly.

Mr. Haines pressed his hand feebly in token of gratitude, and two or three minutes later breathed his last.

By mid-day the loss had been so heavy that the men would no longer stand to their guns. After a consultation with his officers Mr. Holwell agreed that further resistance was hopeless. The flag of truce was therefore hoisted, and one of the officers at once started for the nabob's camp, with instruc-

tions to make the best terms he could for the garrison. When the gates were opened the enemy, seizing the opportunity, rushed in in great numbers, and as resistance was impossible the garrison laid down their arms. Charlie at once hurried to the spot where Ada was anxiously awaiting news with the only other European lady who had not escaped. Both were exhausted with weeping.

"Where is papa, Captain Marryat?" Ada asked.

Charlie knew that the poor girl would need all her strength for what she might have to undergo, and at once resolved that, for the present at least, it would be better that she should be in ignorance of the fate of her father. He therefore said that for the present Mr. Haines was unable to come, and had asked him to look after her.

It was not until five o'clock that the nabob entered the fort. He was furious at hearing that only five lacs of rupees had been found in the treasury, as he had expected to become possessed of a much larger sum. The whole of the Eurasians, or half-castes, and natives found in the fort were allowed to return to their homes. Mr. Holwell was then sent for, and after the nabob had ex-

pressed his resentment at the small amount found in the treasury, he was dismissed, the nabob assuring him of his protection.

Mr. Holwell returned to his English companions, who, one hundred and forty-six in number, including the two ladies, were drawn up under the verandah in front of the prison. The nabob then returned to his camp.

THE BLACK HOLE.—II.

Some native officers went in search of a building where the prisoners could be confined, but every room in the fort had already been taken possession of by the nabob's soldiers and officers.

At eight o'clock they returned with the news that they could find no place vacant, and the officer in command at once ordered the prisoners into a small room, used as a guard-room, eighteen feet square. In vain the Europeans protested that it was impossible the room could contain them, in vain they implored the officer to allow some of them to be confined in an adjoining cell.

The wretch was deaf to their entreaties. He ordered his soldiers to charge the prisoners, and these, with blows of the butt-ends

of the muskets and prods of the bayonets, were driven into the narrow cell.

Charlie's servant, Tim Kelly, kept close to his master. Mr. Haines' native servant, Hossein, who would fain have shared his master's fortunes, was forcibly torn from him when the English prisoners were separated from the natives.

The day had been unusually hot. The night was close and sultry, and the arched verandah outside further hindered the entrance of air, and this, with the heavy fumes of powder, created an intolerable thirst. Scarcely were the prisoners driven into their narrow cell, where even standing wedged together there was barely room for them, than cries for water were raised.

"Tim, my boy," Charlie said, "we may say good-bye to each other now, for I doubt if one will be alive when the door is opened in the morning."

On entering, Charlie, always keeping Ada Haines by his side, had taken his place against the wall farthest from the window, which was closed with iron bars.

"I think, yer honour," Tim said, "that if we could get nearer to the window we might breathe a little more easily."

"Ay, Tim; but there will be a fight for life round that window before long. You and I might hold our own if we could get there, though it would be no easy matter where all are struggling for life, but this poor little girl would be crushed to death. Besides, I believe that what chance there is, faint as it may be, is greater for us here than there.

"The rush towards the window, which is beginning already as you see, will grow greater and greater; and the more men struggle and strive, the more air they require. Let us remain where we are. Strip off your coat and waistcoat, and breathe as quietly and easily as you can. Every hour the crowd will thin, and we may yet hold on till morning."

This conversation had been held in a low voice. Charlie then turned to the girl.

"How are you feeling, Ada?" he asked cheerfully. "It's hot, isn't it?"

"It is dreadful," she panted, "and I seem choking from want of air; and oh, Captain Marryat, I am so thirsty!"

"It is hot, my dear, terribly hot, but we must make the best of it; and I hope in a few days you will join your mamma on board ship. That will be pleasant, won't it?"

"Where is papa?" the girl wailed.

"I don't know where he is now, my child. At any rate we must feel very glad that he's not shut up here with us. Now take your bonnet off and your shawl. We must be as quiet and cheerful as possible. I'm afraid, Ada, we have a bad time before us to-night. But try to keep cheerful and quiet, and above all, dear, pray God to give you strength to carry you through it, and to restore you safe to your mamma in a few days."

THE BLACK HOLE.—III.

As time went on the scene in the dungeon became terrible. Shouts, oaths, cries of all kinds, rose in the air. Round the window men fought like wild beasts, tearing each other down, or clinging to the bars for dear life, for a breath of the air without. Panting, struggling, crying, men sank exhausted upon the floor, and the last remnants of life were trodden out of them by those who surged forward to get near the window.

In vain Mr. Holwell implored them to keep quiet for their own sakes. His voice was lost in the terrible din. Men, a few

hours ago rich and respected merchants, fought now like maddened beasts for a breath of fresh air. In vain those at the window screamed to the guards without, imploring them to bring water. Their prayers and entreaties were replied to only with brutal scoffs.

Several times Charlie and Tim, standing together against the wall behind, where there was now room to move, lifted Ada between them, and sat her on their shoulders in order that, raised above the crowd, she might breathe more freely. Each time, after sitting there for a while, the poor girl begged to come down again, the sight of the terrible struggle ever going on at the window being too much for her.

Hour passed after hour. There was more room now, for already half the inmates of the place had succumbed. The noises, too, had lessened, for no longer could the parched lips and throats utter articulate sounds. Charlie and Tim, strong men as they were, leaned utterly exhausted against the wall, bathed in perspiration, gasping for air.

"Half the night must be gone, Tim," Charlie said, "and I think, with God's help, we shall live through it. The numbers are

lessening fast, and every one who goes leaves more air for the rest of us. Cheer up, Ada dear, 'twill not be very long till morning."

"I think I shall die soon," the girl gasped. "I shall never see papa or mamma again. You have been very kind, Captain Marryat, but it is no use."

"Oh, but it is of use," Charlie said cheerfully. "I don't mean to let you die at all, but to hand you over to mamma safe and sound. There, lay your head against me, dear, and say your prayers, and try and go off to sleep."

Presently, however, Ada's figure drooped more and more, until her whole weight leaned upon Charlie's arm.

"She has fainted, Tim," he said. "Help me to raise her well in my arms, and lay her head on my shoulder. That's right. Now you'll find her shawl somewhere under my feet; hold it up and make a fan of it. Now try to send some air into her face."

By this time not more than fifty out of the hundred and forty-six who entered the cell were alive. Suddenly a scream of joy from those near the window proclaimed that a native was approaching with some water. The struggle at the window was fiercer than

ever. The bowl was too wide to pass through the bars, and the water was being spilt in vain; each man who strove to get his face far enough through to touch the bowl being torn back by his eager comrades behind.

THE BLACK HOLE.—IV.

"Tim," Charlie said, "you are now much stronger than most of them. They are faint from the struggles. Make a charge to the window. Take that little shawl and dip it into the bowl or whatever they have there, and then fight your way back with it."

"I will do it, yer honour," said Tim, and he rushed into the struggling group. Weak as he was from exhaustion and thirst, he was as a giant to most of the poor wretches who had been struggling and crying all night, and, in spite of their cries and curses, he broke through them and forced his way to the window.

The man with the bowl was on the point of turning away, the water being spilt in the vain attempts of those within to obtain it. By the light of the fire which the guard had lit outside, Tim saw his face.

"Hossein," he exclaimed, "more water, for God's sake! The master's alive yet."

Hossein at once withdrew, but soon again approached with the bowl. The officer in charge angrily ordered him to draw back.

"Let the infidel dogs howl," he said: "They shall have no more."

Regardless of the order, Hossein ran to the window, and Tim thrust the shawl into the water at the moment when the officer, rushing forward, struck Hossein to the ground: a cry of anguish rising from the prisoners as they saw the water dashed from their lips. Tim made his way back to the side of his master. Had those who still remained alive been aware of the supply of water which he carried in the shawl they would have torn it from him; but none save those just at the window had noticed the act, and inside it was still entirely dark.

"Thank God, yer honour, here it is," Tim said; "and who should have brought it but Hossein. Shure, yer honour, we both owe our lives to him this time, for I'm sure I should have been choked by thirst before morning."

Ada was now lowered to the ground, and a corner of the folded shawl was placed

between her lips, and the water allowed to trickle down. With a gasping sigh she presently recovered.

"That is delicious," she murmured. "That is delicious."

Raising her to her feet, Charlie and Tim both sucked the dripping shawl, until the first agonies of thirst were relieved. Then tearing off a portion in case Ada should again require it, Charlie passed the shawl to Mr. Holwell, who, after sucking it for a moment, again passed it on to several standing round. In this way many of those who would otherwise have succumbed were enabled to hold on until morning.

Presently the first dawn of daylight appeared, giving fresh hopes to the few survivors. There were now only some six or eight standing by the window, and a few standing or leaning against the walls around. The room itself was heaped high with the dead.

It was not until two hours later that the doors were opened and the guard entered, and it was found that of the hundred and forty-six English people inclosed there the night before, only twenty-three still breathed. Of these very few retained strength to stagger

out through the door. The rest were carried out and laid in the verandah.

When the nabob came into the fort in the morning, he ordered Mr. Holwell to be brought before him. He was unable to walk, but was carried to his presence. The brutal nabob expressed no regret for what had happened, but loaded him with abuse on account of the paucity of the treasure, and ordered him and his friends to be placed in confinement.

UNIV. OF CALIF. LIBRARY, LOS ANGELES

UC SOUTHERN REGIONAL LIBRARY FACILITY
A 000 134 754 1